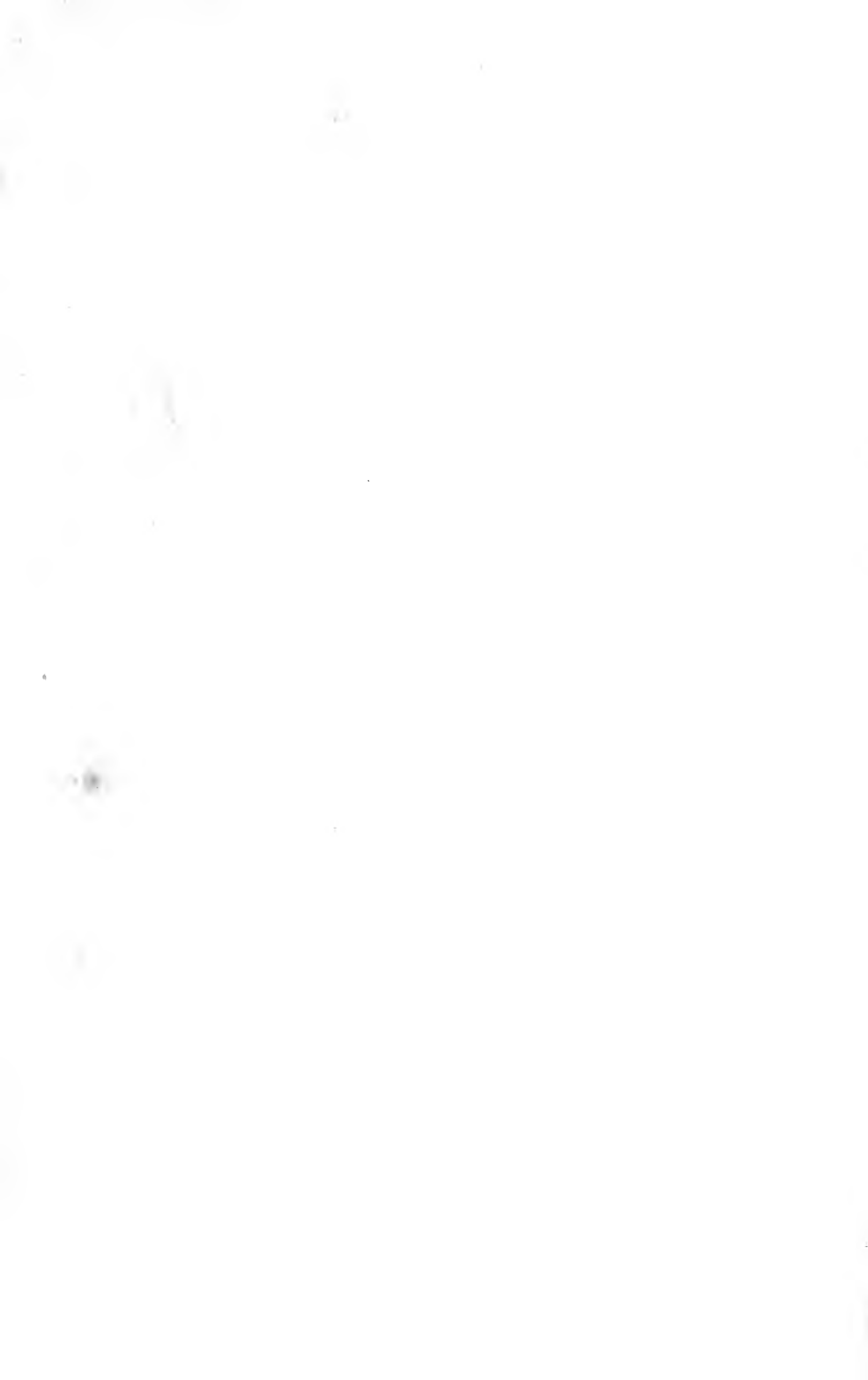


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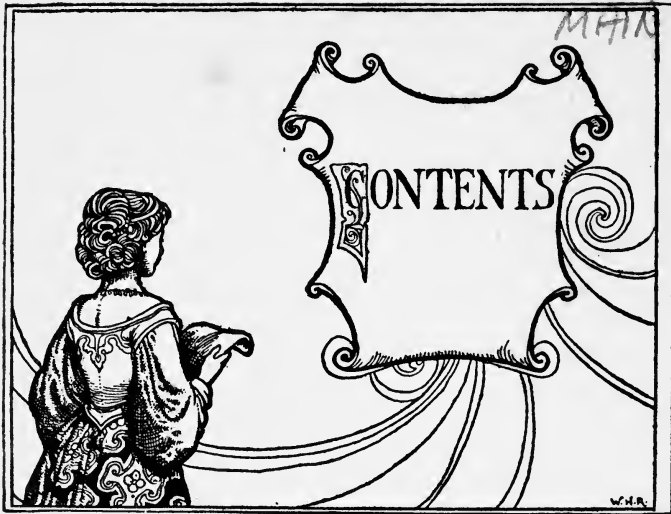
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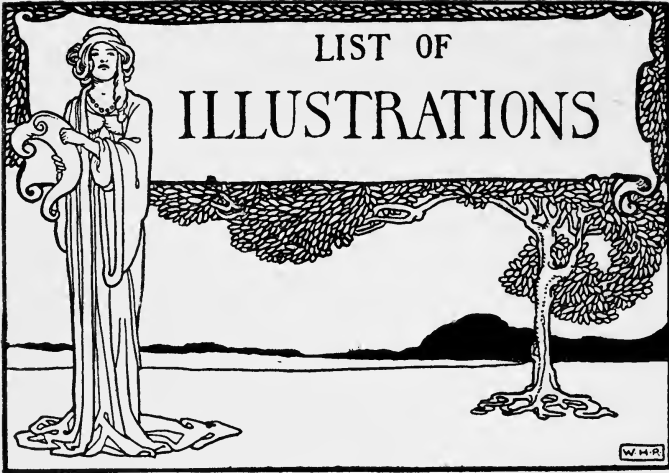
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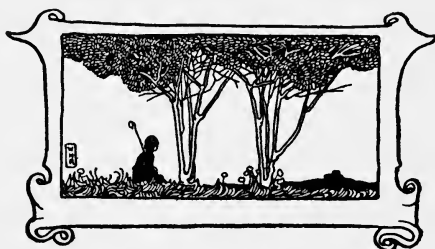
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INTRODUCTION

“A LIE,” says an American proverb, “will run from Maine to Mexico while Truth is putting on its boots,” and the memories of few celebrated men have been more freely aspersed or more tardily vindicated than has that of Edgar Allan Poe. No sooner was the breath out of his body than his enemies addressed themselves to the congenial task of bespattering his reputation, and continued to do so, unchecked and almost unchallenged, for many years. Amongst other charges so contemptible as to be unworthy of a moment’s consideration, he was held up to public execration as a confirmed inebriate and denounced as a shameless plagiarist. At this distance of time it is hardly necessary to remark that the former charge was a particularly cruel perversion of the truth, while the latter was entirely without foundation. But it is a well-known axiom that, if only a sufficiency of mud is thrown, some of it is sure to stick; and in consequence Poe was for a long time denied that place on the roll of fame to which his remarkable talents, both as a poet and a romancer, fairly entitled him. The present generation, however, has witnessed a signal reaction in his favour. Thanks to the untiring efforts of several prominent men of letters both in his own country and in England, the darker

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shadows which rested upon his name have been effectually dispersed; the world has gradually come to take a more just view both of his character and his genius; and in this, the closing year of the nineteenth century, we find Poe's reputation more firmly established than at any time since his untimely death in 1849.

To a right understanding of the works of any author some knowledge of his life is essential, for a man's writings are always to a greater or less extent the reflection of his character and his surroundings. Of course there are exceptions to this as to other rules. There are authors whose forte lies in describing the passions and the impossibility of controlling them, and who in private life are confirmed misogynists; while there are others, whose most entertaining books have been dictated upon a bed of suffering from which there was little chance of their ever rising again. But Poe was not one of these exceptions: in his writings—and more especially in his poetry—his character is mirrored for all men to behold it.

Naturally of a morbid temperament, Poe's innate propensity to look upon the dark side of things was strengthened by the circumstances in which he was placed. His life was one of continuous disappointment. He laboured incessantly, and hardly earned enough to keep body and soul together; he was, perhaps, the most original genius of his time, and was accused of pilfering from the work of vastly inferior minds; he was

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intensely ambitious, and remained a literary hack to the end of his days ; he was of a most affectionate disposition, and was compelled to witness the one whom he loved best upon earth in the grip of a cruel and lingering disease, without possessing the means of procuring her the comforts which might have alleviated her sufferings. Knowing all this, can we wonder at the tone of settled melancholy which pervades his poetry—the regret for what might have been, the yearning for what can never be ? Here and there, it is true, he strikes a different note, as in “Eulalie” and the charming little lyric “To Helen,” which latter poem, however, was written when he was still a boy ; but these variations, like glimpses of blue sky on a dark and lowering horizon, only serve to intensify the general gloom. And yet, in spite of their sadness, there is a pathetic sweetness in his verses, which appeals irresistibly to the heart, and makes the reader fain to admit that in his particular strain Poe is indeed a master.

Born at Boston on January 19th, 1809—the son of one David Poe, a man of good family, who had married an actress and subsequently adopted his wife’s profession—Edgar Allan Poe had the misfortune to lose both his parents in infancy, after which he was adopted by his godfather, Mr. John Allan, a wealthy and childless Richmond merchant, with the intention, it is thought, of making him his heir. The boy was handsome, witty, and precocious, and was

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petted and indulged by his adopted father to his heart's content; indeed, it is to the injudicious treatment which he then received that Poe himself ascribes many of the difficulties which beset his path in after life.

When eight years old he was brought to England and placed at a school at Stoke Newington kept by a Dr. Bransby, who is amusingly depicted in "William Wilson," one of Poe's finest stories. Here he remained five years, when he returned to America, and after studying until he was seventeen at a Richmond academy, matriculated at the University of Virginia, at Charlottesville. At the University he seems to have acquired some reputation as a scholar; but at the end of his first session a difference of opinion with his godfather in respect of some gambling debts, which the old gentlemen very properly refused to pay, led to an open quarrel, and Poe, instead of returning to Charlottesville, set out for Europe, with the intention of assisting the Greeks, then struggling to free themselves from the intolerable yoke of Turkey. It does not appear, however, that he took any part in the war, nor even beheld, except in his mind's eye, the remains of "the glory that *was* Greece." After wandering about the Continent for a couple of years he returned home, became reconciled to Mr. Allan, and, having expressed a wish to enter the army, was accordingly nominated to a cadetship at West Point. But, alas, the "Imp of the Perverse"

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was ever at his heels, and in less than twelve months he was cashiered "for various neglects of duty and disobedience of orders."

The loss of his profession—no great matter in itself, for anyone less fitted for the strict discipline of a military life it would be difficult to imagine—was followed by another and far more serious quarrel with his adopted father, with the result that the young man found himself thrown upon his own resources. He had already published a small volume of poems—those comprised in his last collection as "Poems written in Youth"—which included the delightful stanzas beginning "Helen, thy beauty is to me," and he now determined to turn to literature for a livelihood. Nothing is known of his career for the next two years; but in 1833 with a tale, "A MS. found in a Bottle," and a poem, "The Coliseum," he carried off two prizes offered for competition by a Baltimore newspaper, and having attracted the notice of one of the judges—Mr. John Kennedy, a well-known literary man—he obtained through his influence employment on "The Southern Literary Messenger," at Richmond.

Henceforth, until his death, Poe was intimately connected with American journalism, and more than one moribund periodical was indebted to his eloquent pen for a fresh lease of life. He was an indefatigable worker, pouring forth poems, essays, stories, and reviews with feverish energy; and, at the same time, so fas-

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tidious that he never permitted a manuscript to leave his hands until he was satisfied that he had given the public of his very best. Unfortunately in America in those days literary work was very inadequately remunerated, while copyright was a mere farce; so that even for his finest poems and his most powerful tales Poe never received more than fifty or sixty dollars, and generally very much less, and was in consequence seldom free from pecuniary embarrassment. "The Raven," which appeared in 1845 in Cotton's "American Review," brought him immediate fame, and—ten dollars; and while his poem was being read, and recited, and parodied all over the English-speaking world, the author was actually in want of the common necessaries of life. To add to his troubles, his wife, Virginia Clemm, a beautiful and charming girl whom he had married in 1836, and to whom he was most devotedly attached, had soon after their marriage contracted a fatal malady, and was slowly fading away before his eyes; and his anxiety on her behalf thoroughly unnerved him and weakened his power of self-restraint, never at any time very great. It was this, combined with ill-health and the strain of overwork, which drove him to the use of the stimulants which ultimately proved his ruin; but the statement that he habitually drank to excess was a malicious fabrication. The fact was that poor Poe, in common with many other people of a nervous, highly-strung tempera-

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ment, was, as one of his most intimate friends assures us, unable to take "even a single glass of wine" with impunity.

Mrs. Poe died in 1847, and in the autumn of the following year Poe became engaged to a widow, named Mrs. Whitman, a lady of considerable literary attainments. This engagement, from which his friends hoped much, was unfortunately soon broken off, for reasons which have never been satisfactorily explained, and on October 7th, 1849, the poet died under painful circumstances at Baltimore.

It is frequently asserted that Poe is a single-poem poet—that he is indebted for the niche he now occupies in the Temple of Song mainly to his wonderful poem "The Raven"; and that if "The Raven" had never been written, Poe would now be remembered merely as a skilful weaver of sensational romances, who wrote passable, if somewhat fantastic, verses in his leisure moments. But those who hold this opinion not only do Poe a grave injustice, but admit themselves incapable of appreciating some of the very finest lyrics in the English language. "The Raven," it is true, is the poem whose artificial qualities appeal most strongly to the fancy of the general reader, and for this reason, if for no other, is entitled to all due respect from the critic; but remarkable as it undoubtedly is, it is open to question whether, considered purely as a poem, it is quite on the same plane with that masterpiece of imagina-

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tion "The City in the Sea," the mystical town where "Death has reared himself a throne," or with that exquisite lyric "The Sleeper," in which Poe's inimitable power as a word-painter rises to such a height that we almost seem to see the beautiful dead woman lying pale and still in her "length of tress" waiting to exchange her death-chamber

"For one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy."

Again, if neither "The Raven" nor either of the two poems we have just mentioned had been given to the world, such productions as "The Haunted Palace," "Annabel Lee," and "To Helen," to say nothing of "Israfel," "Ulalume," and "The Bells," containing as they do passages of the rarest charm, would surely have sufficed to keep their author's memory green for all time. What can one possibly desire finer of their kind than those lines from that splendid piece of verbal music, "The Haunted Palace," which no lover of Poe can resist quoting?—

"Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,
(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago,)
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A wingèd odour went away."

However, although, as we have said, "The

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Raven" is, in its poetical constituents, probably inferior to some of Poe's other poems, yet it is in the mind of the average reader so inseparably connected with its author's claim to rank among

"The bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time,"

that it may not be out of place to say something about the way in which it came to be written. And first let us remark that the impression that still very generally prevails that "The Raven" was inspired by the death of the poet's wife—that she is the "lost Lenore" of the poem—is altogether erroneous, inasmuch as Virginia Poe's death did not take place until January, 1847, while "The Raven" was first published in February, 1845—nearly two years earlier.

Poe himself, in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition," in which he treats us to a very elaborate analysis of the methods employed in writing this poem, while ridiculing the suggestion that it was the offspring of any sudden impulse—of "any species of fine frenzy" under the influence of which poets are popularly believed to compose their masterpieces—does not admit that he is indebted for either the rhythm or the idea of "The Raven" to any extraneous sources. Several of his critics, however, regard this essay as not the least imaginative of his writings, and even hint that

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it is nothing more or less than an ingenious attempt to throw dust in the eyes of a too inquisitive public. One of the ablest and most discriminating of Poe's critics, Mr. Stedman, in the admirable essay which is prefaced to Gustave Doré's illustrations of this poem, while not going so far as this, is of opinion that the rhythm of "The Raven" was suggested by Mrs. Browning's (then Elizabeth Barrett) charming poem "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," in proof of which he points out a very remarkable similarity between certain verses in the two poems. Thus in Mrs. Browning's poem we have :

"With a murmurous stir uncertain in the air the purple
curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale
brows."

While in "The Raven" we find :

"And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple
curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt
before."

The fact that it was very largely due to the influence of Poe that Mrs. Browning's works received such a favourable reception in America (she was a frequent contributor to "Graham's Magazine" while it was edited by him); that he always professed the most intense admiration both for her genius and her lyrical methods; and that he subsequently dedicated to her, as

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“the noblest of her sex,” “The Raven and Other Poems,” would certainly seem to lend colour to this suggestion. Mr. Stedman, it may be added, does not insinuate that there is anything in this similarity which can possibly be construed into an act of plagiarism on the part of the American writer; indeed, the whole motive of the two poems—the one a love-story pure and simple with an ideal ending; the other a weird, fantastic creation, breathing an atmosphere of doubt and despair, of desires unfulfilled and hope abandoned—is altogether different.

Another theory, propounded by Mr. Ingram, who has, perhaps, done more than anyone to vindicate the memory of Poe from the calumnies of his *soi-disant* biographer, Griswold, is that the inspiration of “The Raven” is to be found in a poem called “Isidore,” which was contributed by Albert Pike, the Arkansas poet, to “The New Mirror,” at a time when Poe was writing for the same journal. In this poem a bird “whose song enhances depression”—a mocking-bird to wit—also figures, while the refrain is not unlike that of “The Raven.” However, even if we are prepared to admit that “The Raven” is not so entirely the fruit of its author’s imagination as was at first supposed, this fact does not sensibly detract from the merits of a work which must always retain its place amongst the masterpieces of English verse.

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Poe then, as we have endeavoured to show, is very far from being a single-poem poet ; but, on the other hand, he is undoubtedly the poet of a single mood—a mood which by no stretch of the imagination can be called a pleasing one in the ordinary acceptation of the term, but withal so striking and so original as to command—nay, even to compel—the reader's attention. Poe does not sing of "emerald fields" and "ambient streams," like Wordsworth ; of wide, rolling prairies and dense forests of murmuring pines, like Longfellow ; of "stainless knights" and "lily maids," like Tennyson ; nor of love both within and without the limits of the conscience, like Byron. No, his theme is a widely different one from all these. As with his prose romances so with his poetry. Just as in his romances he concerns himself in the main with subjects which most writers of fiction leave severely alone—with death in strange and awful forms ; with the horrors of insanity and remorse ; with men who under mesmeric influences continue to speak long after the King of Terrors has laid his icy finger upon them ; with others who are prematurely buried, and who explore the secrets of the charnel-house—in a word, with what his friend honest John Kennedy called "the terrific" : so in his poetry his song is of phantom cities sinking into fathomless seas ; of demon shapes flitting through enchanted palaces ; of ghoulish haunted tarns ; of "sheeted memories of

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the past"; of loved ones who have been taken from us, and of the utter hopelessness of reunion with them in "the distant Aidenn." Sadness, as we have said elsewhere, is the dominant note of all his poetry; but sadness, as he himself tells us in his "Philosophy of Composition," was his conception of the highest tone of Beauty, and therefore the most legitimate of all the poetical tones. Thus we understand why it is that the death of a beautiful woman—the saddest of all losses—forms the burden of so many of his finest lyrics. How different is all this from Shelley, who defines poetry as what redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man, and is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds; and yet Poe in his earlier efforts, such as "Tamerlane" and "Al Araaf," was obviously the disciple of Shelley!

As we read these wonderful poems we are alternately repelled and attracted; still, strive as we may, we cannot escape the spell of those weird, mystic measures. When once we begin a poem, whether it be "The Raven," "The City in the Sea," or even "The Conqueror Worm," we are compelled, in spite of ourselves, to read on to the end; and when the end is reached, it is not seldom with a sigh of regret that we close the book.

Poe confined himself almost entirely to simple ballad forms—which is the case even in poems like "Ulalume" and "The Bells," where the

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measures certainly seem at first sight to be somewhat intricate—and relied for his effect upon the melody. With him everything was subordinate to sound. Here and there, as in “Ulalume,” it must be admitted that, in striving to please the ear, he approaches perilously near the point where “sense swoons into nonsense”; but, on the whole, as a melodist he achieved wonders, and no poet has used the refrain and the repetend in quite the same way or so effectively. What, for instance, in “The Bells” could possibly be more telling than the constant repetition of the word which gives its name to the poem? The repetend, his free use of which did so much for the success of “The Raven,” he employed even more lavishly in some of his later poems, such as “Lenore,” “Annabel Lee,” “Ulalume,” and “For Annie,” and with the happiest results. Thus :

“An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so
young—
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.”

And again :

“It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.”

In the management of his metres, too, Poe stands almost without a rival. Unlike the majority of poets, who, in determining the length of a poem, are guided by the sense rather than

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by the sound, he regarded the melody as of equal if not of primary importance, and one famous critic has declared that "it would be impossible to omit a line or stanza without injuring the metrical as well as the intelligible effect."

Regret is often expressed that—with the single exception of "Al Aaraaf," which, however, was written when his intellect was still in its adolescent stage, and has done comparatively little to enhance his reputation—Poe, almost alone among the great poets of the nineteenth century, should never have given us a poem of any considerable length. But as a journalistic hack, forced to write by the column for his daily bread, Poe had but scant leisure for the composition of a "Childe Harold," an "Endymion," or a "Hiawatha," and, moreover, it is extremely doubtful whether, even if the range of his possibilities had not been limited by his poverty, he would have done so, as he seems to have had a most profound contempt for prolixity in poetry. In his essay, "The Poetic Principle," he maintains that "the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a flat contradiction in terms,"—that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites by elevating the soul; and that, as all such emotions are, by a psychical necessity, transient, it is obviously impossible for the necessary degree of excitement to be maintained throughout a composition of any great length. "After the lapse of half an hour at the very

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utmost," he says, "it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect and in fact, no longer such." This theory of Poe's gave rise to much hostile criticism, and justly so; still, it cannot be doubted that the time-honoured notion that no poem can be termed great that is not a long one, and no poet worthy of the name who has not written a long poem, has deprived the world of much fine lyric poetry by compelling able men to expend their time and energy in the production of bulky epics, for which in many cases their genius was but ill-adapted, instead of confining themselves to the lighter forms of verse. While thus condemning prolixity, however, Poe does not deny that a poem may be "improperly brief," and thus "degenerate into mere epigrammatism"; and that "a *very* short poem," however great its intrinsic merits may be, can never hope to produce a profound or a lasting effect. He mentions Shelley's exquisite "Lines to an Indian Air," and his own friend Willis's pathetic ballad, "Unseen Spirits," as instances of poems which had failed to receive adequate recognition by reason of undue brevity.

The secret of Poe's hostility to the long poem is probably to be found in the fact that he had the strongest possible aversion to the introduction of metaphysics into poetry, which he regarded as the "child of Taste," whose sole function ought to be "the rhythmical creation of Beauty"; and the long poem had to a very

INTRODUCTION

large extent become identified with the Didactic school of poets, of which Wordsworth was the principal exponent.

Poe was not the first to raise a protest against what he termed "the *heresy* of the Didactic." Years before, Keats had declared that "people hated poetry that had a palpable design upon them," and that "poetry should be great and unobtrusive." Poe, however, went very much farther than the author of "Endymion" would have been likely to accompany him, for he maintains that "poetry has only collateral relations with the intellect and the conscience, and, unless incidentally, no concern whatever with either duty or truth." To anyone who has even a superficial acquaintance with the great masters of verse the fallacy of such a proposition is obvious. Without the conception of duty and of truth, from which spring noble passions and great deeds—religious enthusiasm, love of humanity, love of liberty, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and patriotism—we should have had no Æschylus, no Sophocles, no Euripides, no Homer, no Shakespeare, no Milton, and no Tennyson—which reflection may enable us to bear with comparative equanimity the platitudes of the latter-day poet.

What Poe might have done or have left undone, had not "unmerciful Disaster" dogged his footsteps, and carried him off, as it had carried off Burns, and Keats, and Shelley, and Byron, and many another child of genius, before he

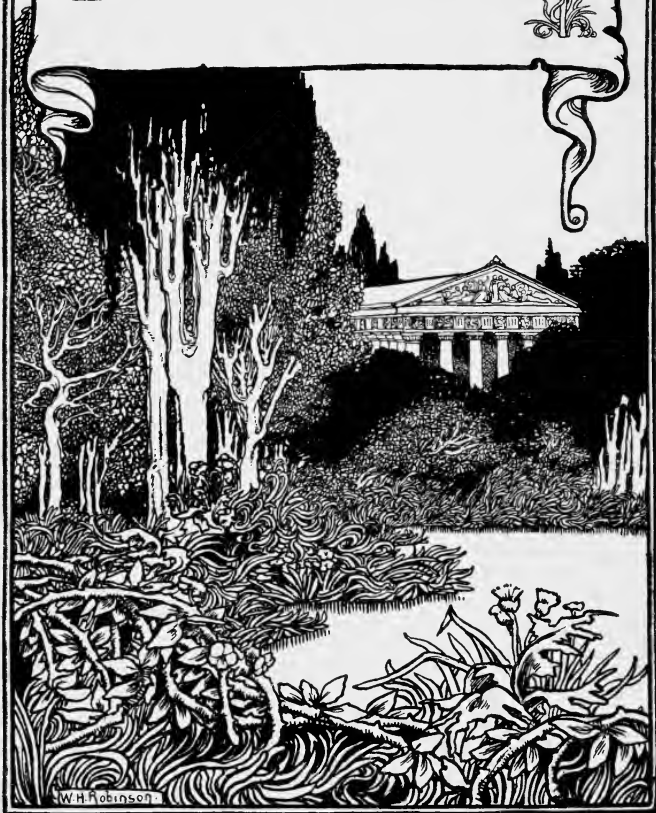
INTRODUCTION

had reached the meridian of his days, it were idle to speculate; but this much is certain—that, when the works of far greater poets have fallen into neglect, Poe will still be read and still appreciated, for, in the domain which he made so peculiarly his own, it is hardly possible to imagine that he will ever have to encounter anything approaching serious rivalry, while the feelings which he appeals to are universal.

NOEL WILLIAMS.



PREFACE
AND EDUCATION
OF VOLUME OF 1845



W. H. Robinson



THESE trifles are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going at random the "rounds of the press." I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all. In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself. Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making, at any time, any serious effort in what, under happier circumstances, would have been the field of my choice. With me poetry has been not a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence: they must not—they cannot at will be excited, with an eye to the paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind.

E. A. P.





DEDICATION
OF THE VOLUME OF 1845

TO
THE NOBLEST OF HER SEX—

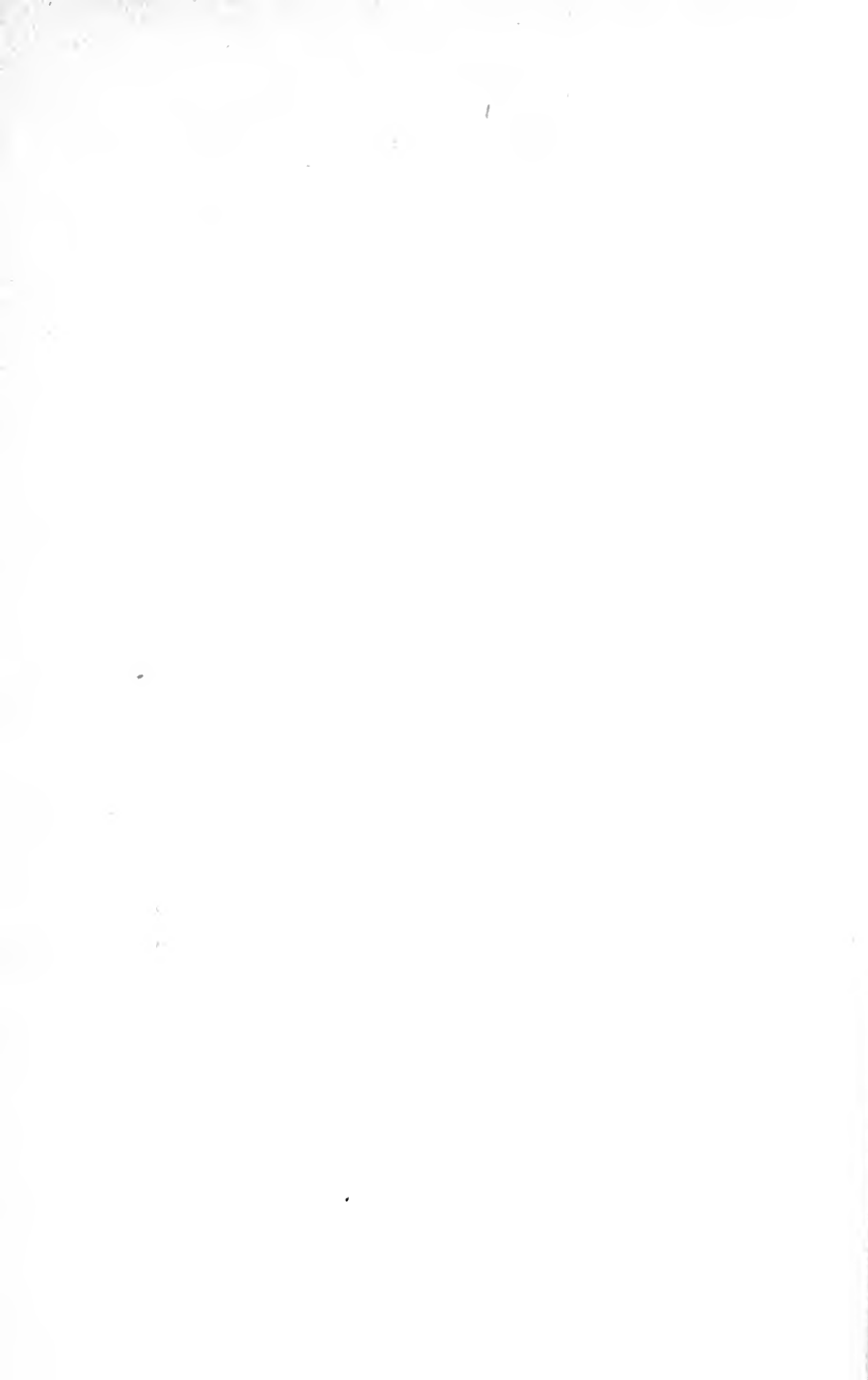
TO THE AUTHOR OF
“THE DRAMA OF EXILE”—

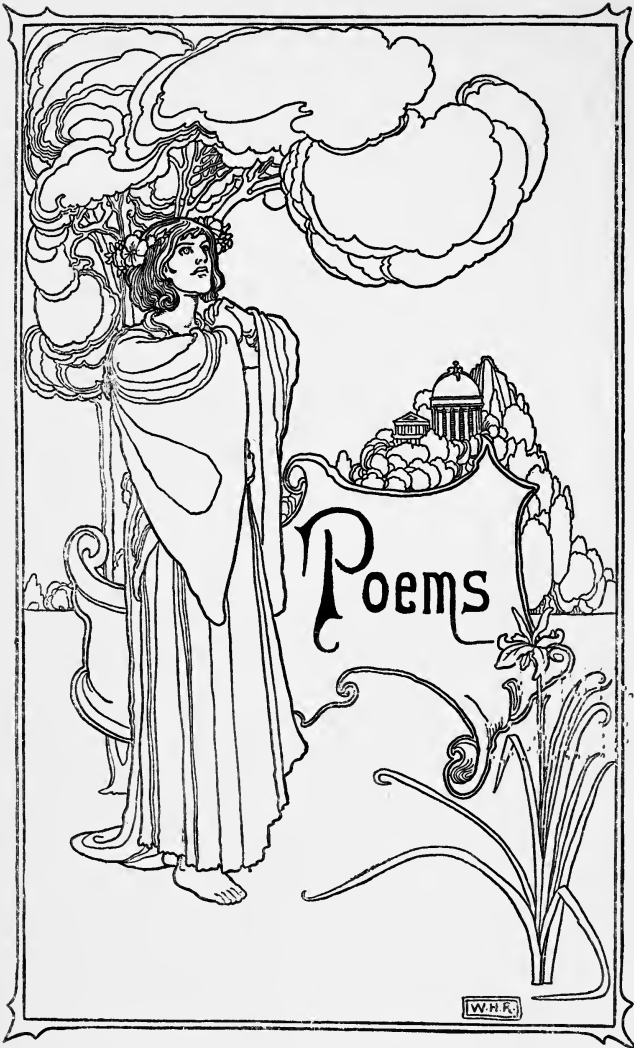
TO
MISS ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT,
OF ENGLAND,

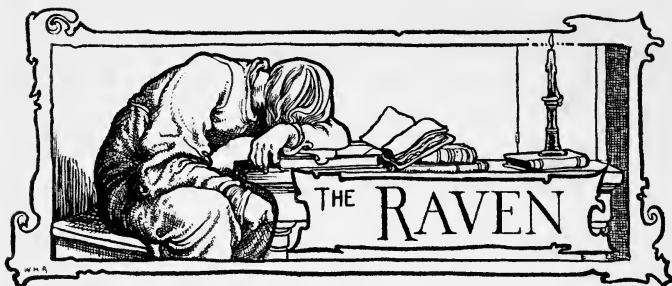
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME

WITH THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRATION AND
WITH THE MOST SINCERE ESTEEM.

E. A. P.







ONCE upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered,
weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten
lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came
a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping—rapping at my cham-
ber door.

“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my cham-
ber door—

Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak De-
cember,

And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost
upon the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought
to borrow

From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the
lost Lenore—

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels
name Lenore—

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple
curtain

Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never
felt before ;

THE RAVEN

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood
repeating
" 'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber
door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber
door ;—
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger ; hesitating then no
longer,
" Sir," said I, " or Madam, truly your forgiveness I
implore ;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came
rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping—tapping at my
chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened
wide the door :—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to
dream before ;
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave
no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered
word, " Lenore !"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the
word, " Lenore !"
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me
burning,
Soon I heard again a tapping, somewhat louder than
before.
" Surely," said I, " surely that is something at my
window lattice ;

THE RAVEN

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery
explore—

Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery
explore ;—

’Tis the wind and nothing more.”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt
and flutter,

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days
of yore ;

Not the least obeisance made he ; not an instant
stopped or stayed he ;

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my
chamber door—

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber
door—

Perched, and sat, and nothing more

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into
smiling,

By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it
wore,

“ Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said,
“ art sure no craven,

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the
Nightly shore—

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plu-
tonian shore !”

Quoth the Raven, “ Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse
so plainly,

Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy
bore ;

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human
being

Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his
chamber door—

THE RAVEN

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his
chamber door,

With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust,
spoke only

That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did
outpour.

Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then
he fluttered—

Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends
have flown before—

On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have
flown before."

Then the bird said, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly
spoken,

"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock
and store,

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful
Disaster

Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one
burden bore—

Till the dirges of his Hope the melancholy burden
bore

Of 'Never—nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into
smiling,

Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird
and bust and door ;

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to
linking

Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of
yore—

What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous
bird of yore

Meant in croaking "Nevermore."



W.H.A.

* THE * NIGHTS *



PLUTONIAN + SHORE+

THE RAVEN

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable ex-
pressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my
bosom's core ;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease
reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light
gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light
gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore !

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from
an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the
tufted floor.
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these
angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of
Lenore !
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this
lost Lenore !”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet !” said I, “thing of evil !—prophet still, if
bird or devil !—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed
thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land en-
chanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I
implore—
Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead ?—tell me—tell me,
I implore !”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

Prophet !” said I, “thing of evil !—prophet still, if
bird or devil !

THE RAVEN

By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God
we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant
Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name
Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels
name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I
shrieked, upstarting—
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s
Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul
hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above
my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form
from off my door!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

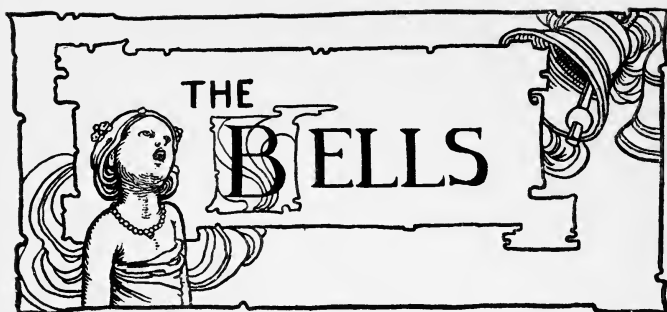
And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is
sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber
door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that
is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his
shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating
on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!



THE
BELLS

W.H. ROBINSON





I

HEAR the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!

What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars, that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II

Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells!

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight!
From the molten-golden notes,
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!

THE BELLS

Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells
How it swells!
How it dwells
On the future! how it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

III

Hear the loud alarm bells—
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror now their turbulency tells!
In the startled ear of night
How they scream out their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
Leaping higher, higher, higher,
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavour
Now—now to sit or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair!
How they clang, and crash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear it fully knows,
By the twanging,
And the clanging,



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THE BELLS

How the danger ebbs and flows ;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,
 In the jangling,
 And the wrangling,
How the danger sinks and swells,
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the
bells—

 Of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells—
In the clamour and the clangour of the bells !

IV

Hear the tolling of the bells—
 Iron bells !
What a world of solemn thought their monody com-
pels !

 In the silence of the night,
 How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone !
 For every sound that floats
 From the rust within their throats
 Is a groan.

 And the people—ah, the people—
 They that dwell up in the steeple,
 All alone,

 And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
 In that muffled monotone,

 Feel a glory in so rolling
 On the human heart a stone—

They are neither man nor woman—
They are neither brute nor human—

 They are Ghouls :
And their king it is who tolls ;
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,

 Rolls
A pæan from the bells !

THE BELLS

And his merry bosom swells
 With the pæan of the bells!
And he dances, and he yells;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the pæan of the bells—
 Of the bells:
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the throbbing of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells—
 To the sobbing of the bells;
Keeping time, time, time,
 As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
 To the rolling of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells—
 To the tolling of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells—
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.



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ULALUME

ULALUME

ULALUME

THE skies they were ashen and sober ;
The leaves they were crispèd and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere ;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year ;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul—
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll—
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,
But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—
Our memories were treacherous and sere—
For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year—
(Ah, night of all nights in the year !)
We noted not the dim lake of Auber—
(Though once we had journeyed down here)—
Remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent
And star-dials pointed to morn—
As the sun-dials hinted of morn—

ULALUME



At the end of our path a
liquescent
And nebulous lustre was
born,
Out of which a miraculous
crescent
Arose with a duplicate
horn—
Astarte's bediamonded cres-
cent
Distinct with its duplic-
ate horn.

And I said—" She is warmer
than Dian :
She rolls through an
ether of sighs—
She revels in a region
of sighs :
She has seen that the tears
are not dry on
These cheeks, where the
worm never dies,
And has come past the stars
of the Lion
To point us the path to
the skies—
To the Lethean peace
of the skies—
Come up, in despite of the
Lion,
To shine on us with her
bright eyes—
Come up through the lair of
the Lion,
With love in her lumin-
ous eyes."

ULALUME

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,
Said—" Sadly this star I mistrust—
Her pallor I strangely mistrust :—
Oh, hasten !—oh, let us not linger !
Oh, fly !—let us fly !—for we must."
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
Wings till they trailed in the dust—



In agony sobbed, letting sink her
Plumes till they trailed in the dust—
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.
I replied—" This is nothing but dreaming :
Let us on by this tremulous light !
Let us bathe in this crystalline light !
Its Sibyllic splendour is beaming
With Hope and in Beauty to-night :—
See !—it flickers up the sky through the night !

ULALUME

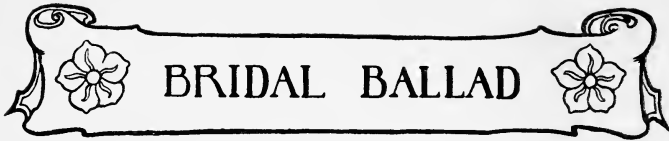
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
And be sure it will lead us aright—
We safely may trust to a gleaming
That cannot but guide us aright,
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night.”

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom—
And conquered her scruples and gloom ;
And we passed to the end of a vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb—
By the door of a legended tomb ;
And I said—“ What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb ?”
She replied—“ Ulalume—Ulalume—
’Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume !”

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
As the leaves that were crispèd and sere—
As the leaves that were withering and sere ;
And I cried—“ It was surely October
On *this* very night of last year
That I journeyed—I journeyed down here—
That I brought a dread burden down here !
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah, what demon has tempted me here ?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber—
This misty mid region of Weir—
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,—
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.”



ULALUME.



BRIDAL BALLAD

THE ring is on my hand,
And the wreath is on my brow ;
Satins and jewels grand
Are all at my command,
And I am happy now.

And my lord he loves me well ;
But, when first he breathed his vow,
I felt my bosom swell—
For the words rang as a knell,
And the voice seemed *his* who fell
In the battle down the dell,
And who is happy now.

But he spoke to reassure me,
And he kissed my pallid brow,
While a reverie came o'er me,
And to the churchyard bore me,
And I sighed to him before me,
Thinking him dead D'Elormie,
"Oh, I am happy now!"

And thus the words were spoken,
And thus the plighted vow,
And, though my faith be broken,
And, though my heart be broken,
Behold the golden token
That *proves* me happy now !

Would to God I could awaken !
For I dream I know not how,
And my soul is sorely shaken
Lest an evil step be taken,—
Lest the dead who is forsaken
May not be happy now.



LENORE

AH, broken is the golden bowl!
the spirit flown for ever!
Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul
floats on the Stygian river.
And, Guyde Vere, hast *thou* no tear?
—weep now or never more!
See! on yon drear and rigid bier
low lies thy love, Lenore!

Come! let the burial rite be read—the funeral song
be sung!—
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so
young—
A dirge for her, the doubly dead in that she died so
young.

“Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated
her for her pride,
And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her—
that she died!
How *shall* the ritual, then, be read?—the requiem
how be sung
By you—by yours, the evil eye,—by yours, the
slandrous tongue
That did to death the innocence that died, and died so
young?”

Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sabbath
song



LENORE

W. H. ROBINSON

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LENORE

Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no
wrong!
The sweet Lenore hath "gone before," with Hope,
that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have
been thy bride—
For her, the fair and *débonnaire*, that now so lowly
lies,
The life upon her yellow hair but not within her
eyes—
The life still there, upon her hair—the death upon her
eyes.

"Avaunt! to-night my heart is light. No dirge will I
upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a pæan of old
days!
Let *no* bell toll!—lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed
mirth,
Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the
damnèd Earth.
To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant
ghost is riven—
From Hell unto a high estate far up within the
Heaven—
From grief and groan to a golden throne beside the
King of Heaven."

A VALENTINE

A VALENTINE

FOR her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous eyes,
Brightly expressive as the twins of Leda,
Shall find her own sweet name, that nestling lies
Upon the page, enwrapped from every reader.
Search narrowly the lines!—they hold a treasure
Divine—a talisman—an amulet
That must be worn *at heart*. Search well the measure—
The words—the syllables! Do not forget
The trivialest point, or you may lose your labour!
And yet there is in this no Gordian knot
Which one might not undo without a sabre,
If one could merely comprehend the plot.
Enwritten upon the leaf where now are peering
Eyes scintillating soul, there lie *perdus*
Three eloquent words oft uttered in the hearing
Of poets by poets—as the name is a poet's, too.
Its letters, although naturally lying
Like the knight Pinto—Mendez Ferdinando—
Still form a synonym for Truth—Cease trying!
You will not read the riddle, though you do the best
you *can* do.

[To find the name, read the first letter of the first line in connection with the second letter of the second line, the third letter of the third line, the fourth of the fourth, and so on to the end.]



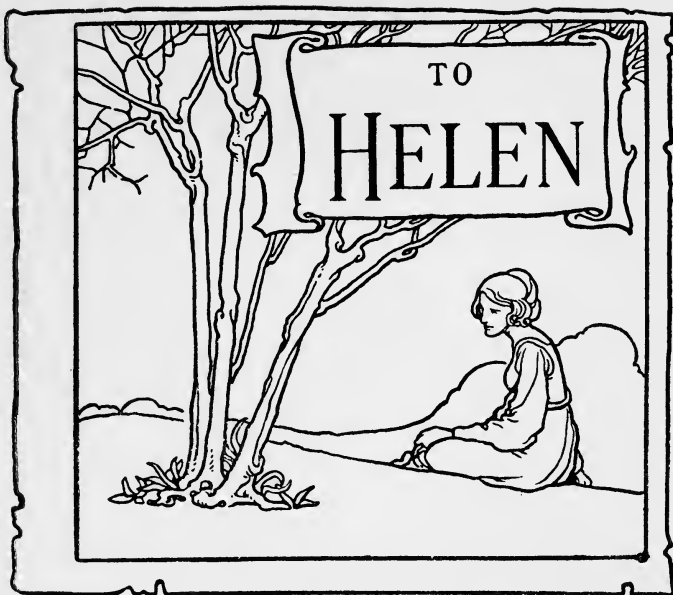


A VALENTINE



“SELDOM we find,” says Solomon Don Dunce,
“Half an idea in the profoundest sonnet.
Through all the flimsy things we see at once
As easily as through a Naples bonnet—
Trash of all trash!—how *can* a lady don it?
Yet heavier far than your Petrarchan stuff—
Owl-downy nonsense that the faintest puff
Twirls into trunk-paper the while you con it.”
And, veritably, Sol is right enough.
The general tuckermanities are arrant
Bubbles—ephemeral and *so* transparent—
But *this* is, now—you may depend upon it—
Stable, opaque, immortal—all by dint
Of the dear names that lie concealed within ’t.

[To find the name, read as in the preceding poem.]



I SAW thee once—once only—years ago :
I must not say how many—but not many.
It was a July midnight ; and from out
A full-orbed moon, that, like thine own soul, soaring,
Sought a precipitate pathway up through heaven,
There fell a silvery-silken veil of light,
With quietude, and sultriness and slumber,
Upon the upturn'd faces of a thousand
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,
Where no wind dared to stir, unless on tiptoe—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That gave out, in return for the love-light,
Their odorous souls in an ecstatic death—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That smiled and died in this parterre, enchanted
By thee, and by the poetry of thy presence.

TO HELEN

Clad all in white, upon a violet bank
I saw thee half-reclining ; while the moon
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the roses,
And on thine own, upturn'd—alas, in sorrow !

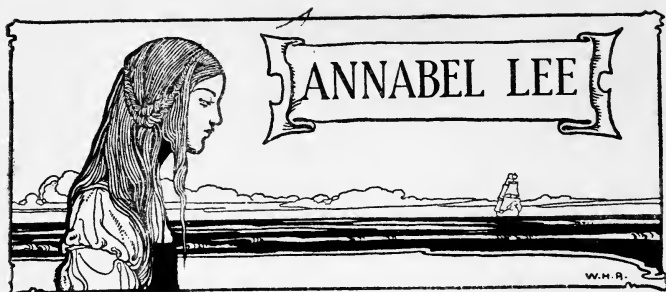
Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight—
Was it not Fate (whose name is also Sorrow),
That bade me pause before that garden-gate,
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses ?
No footstep stirred : the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me—(O Heaven!—O God !
How my heart beats in coupling those two words !)—
Save only thee and me. I paused—I looked—
And in an instant all things disappeared.
(Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted !)
The pearly lustre of the moon went out :
The mossy banks and the meandering paths,
The happy flowers and the repining trees,
Were seen no more : the very roses' odours
Died in the arms of the adoring airs.
All—all expired save thee—save less than thou :
Save only the divine light in thine eyes—
Save but the soul in thine uplifted eyes.
I saw but them—they were the world to me.
I saw but them—saw only them for hours—
Saw only them until the moon went down.
What wild heart-histories seemed to lie enwritten
Upon those crystalline, celestial spheres !
How dark a woe ! yet how sublime a hope !
How silently serene a sea of pride !
How daring an ambition ! yet how deep—
How fathomless a capacity for love !

But now, at length, dear Dian sank from sight,
Into a western couch of thunder-cloud ;
And thou, a ghost, amid the entombing trees
Didst glide away. *Only thine eyes remained.*

TO HELEN

They *would not* go—they never yet have gone.
Lighting my lonely pathway home that night,
They have not left me (as my hopes have) since.
They follow me—they lead me through the years.
They are my ministers—yet I their slave.
Their office is to illumine and enkindle—
My duty, *to be saved* by their bright light,
And purified in their electric fire,
And sanctified in their elysian fire.
They fill my soul with Beauty (which is Hope),
And are far up in Heaven—the stars I kneel to
In the sad, silent watches of my night ;
While even in the meridian glare of day
I see them still—two sweetly scintillant
Venuses, unextinguished by the sun !





IT was many and many a year ago
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of ANNABEL LEE ;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea :
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my ANNABEL LEE ;
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me—
Yes !—that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my ANNABEL LEE.

ANNABEL LEE

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we—
Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE.

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea—
In her tomb by the side of the sea.



THANK Heaven! the crisis—
The danger is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last—
And the fever called "Living"
Is conquered at last.

Sadly, I know,
I am shorn of my strength,
And no muscle I move
As I lie at full length—

FOR ANNIE

But no matter!—I feel
I am better at length.

And I rest so composedly,
Now in my bed,
That any beholder
Might fancy me dead—
Might start at beholding me,
Thinking me dead.

The moaning and groaning,
The sighing and sobbing,
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart :—ah, that horrible,
Horrible throbbing!

The sickness—the nausea—
The pitiless pain—
Have ceased, with the fever
That maddened my brain—
With the fever called “Living”
That burned in my brain.

And oh! of all tortures
That torture the worst
Has abated—the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst :
I have drank of a water
That quenches all thirst :—

Of a water that flows,
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet under ground—
From a cavern not very far
Down under ground.

FOR ANNIE

And ah ! let it never
Be foolishly said
That my room it is gloomy
And narrow my bed—
For man never slept
In a different bed ;
And, to *sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed.

My tantalised spirit
Here blandly reposes,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting its roses—
Its old agitations
Of myrtles and roses :

For now, while so quietly
Lying, it fancies
A holier odour
About it, of pansies—
A rosemary odour,
Commingled with pansies—
With rue and the beautiful
Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,
Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
And the beauty of Annie—
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
To sleep on her breast—
Deeply to sleep
From the heaven of her breast.

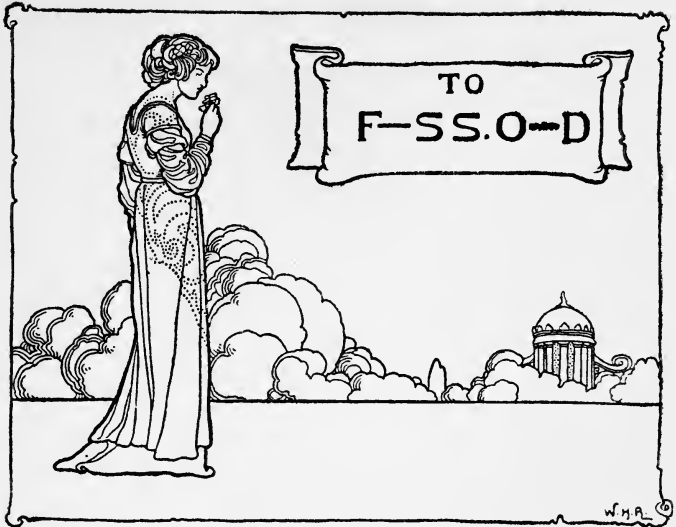
FOR ANNIE

When the light was extinguished
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm—
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,
Now in my bed,
(Knowing her love)
That you fancy me dead—
And I rest so contentedly,
Now in my bed,
(With her love at my breast)
That you fancy me dead—
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead.

But my heart it is brighter
Than all of the many
Stars in the sky,
For it sparkles with Annie—
It glows with the light
Of the love of my Annie—
With the thought of the light
Of the eyes of my Annie.





THOU wouldst be loved?—then let thy heart
From its present pathway part not ;
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.
So with the world thy gentle ways,
Thy grace, thy more than beauty,
Shall be an endless theme of praise,
And love a simple duty.

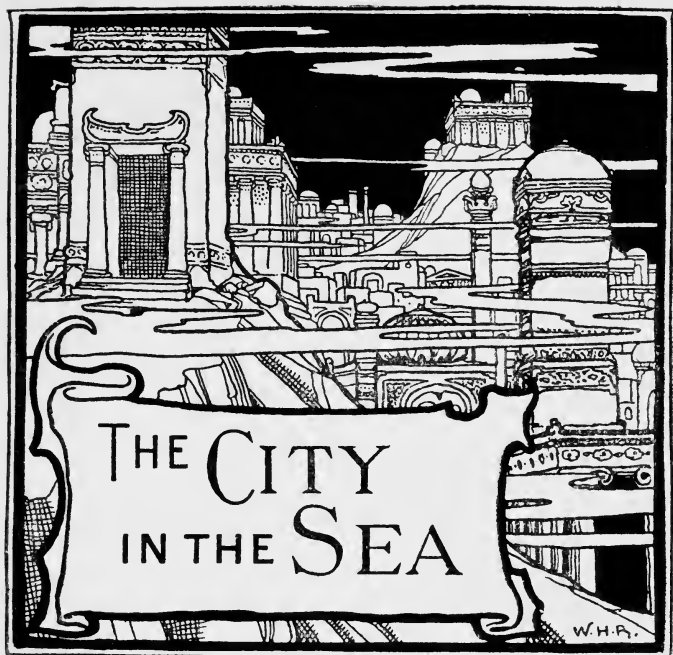
TO — —

NOT long ago, the writer of these lines,
In the mad pride of intellectuality,
Maintained “the power of words”—denied that ever
A thought arose within the human brain
Beyond the utterance of the human tongue :
And now, as if in mockery of that boast,
Two words—two foreign soft dissyllables—

TO ———

Italian tones, made only to be murmured
By angels dreaming in the moonlit "dew
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill,"—
Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart,
Unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of thought,
Richer, far wilder, far diviner visions
Than even the seraph harper, Israfael,
(Who has "the sweetest voice of all God's creatures,")
Could hope to utter. And I! my spells are broken.
The pen falls powerless from my shivering hand.
With thy dear name as text, though bidden by thee,
I cannot write—I cannot speak or think—
Alas, I cannot feel; for 'tis not feeling,
This standing motionless upon the golden
Threshold of the wide-open gate of dreams,
Gazing, entranced, adown the gorgeous vista,
And thrilling as I see, upon the right,
Upon the left, and all the way along,
Amid empurpled vapours, far away
To where the prospect terminates—*thee only!*





LO! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy Heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town ;

THE CITY IN THE SEA

But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently—
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—
Up many and many a marvellous shrine,
Whose wreathèd friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves ;
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye—
Not the gaily-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed ;
For no ripples curl, alas !
Along that wilderness of glass—
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea—
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.

But lo, a stir is in the air !
The wave—there is a movement there !
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.

THE CITY IN THE SEA

The waves have now a redder glow—
The hours are breathing faint and low—
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.



THE CONQUEROR WORM

Lo! 'tis a gala night
Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.
Mimes, in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,
And hither and thither fly—
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their Condor wings
Invisible Woe!



WITH ITS PHANTOM CHASED FOR EVERMORE
BY A CROWD THAT SEIZE IT NOT

THE CONQUEROR WORM

That motley drama—oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore,
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot,
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout
A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
The scenic solitude!
It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And the angels sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!
And, over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, “Man,”
And its hero the Conqueror Worm.





AT midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapour, dewy, dim,
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.
The rosemary nods upon the grave ;
The lily lolls upon the wave ;
Wrapping the fog about its breast,
The ruin moulders into rest ;
Looking like Lethe, see ! the lake
A conscious slumber seems to take,
And would not, for the world, awake.
All Beauty sleeps !—and lo ! where lies
(Her casement open to the skies)
Irene, with her Destinies !

Oh, lady bright ! can it be right—
This window open to the night ?
The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
Laughingly through the lattice drop—
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully—so fearfully—
Above the closed and fringed lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall !

THE SLEEPER

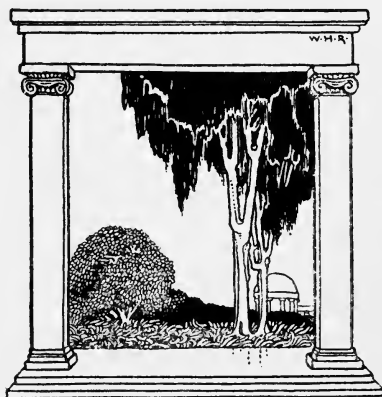
Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
Why and what art thou dreaming here?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden trees!
Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all-solemn silentness!

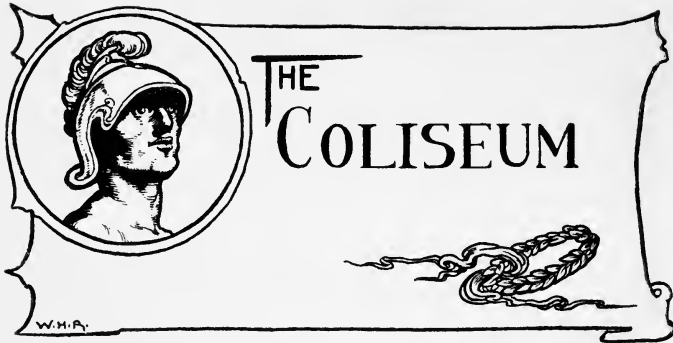


The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!
Heaven have her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
For ever with unopened eye,
While the dim sheeted ghosts go by!

THE SLEEPER

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
As it is lasting, so be deep;
Soft may the worms about her creep!
Far in the forest, dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold—
Some vault that oft hath flung its black
And wingèd panels fluttering back,
Triumphant, o'er the crested palls,
Of her grand family funerals—
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood many an idle stone—
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She ne'er shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within.





TYPE of the antique Rome ! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power !
At length—at length—after so many days
Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie,)
I kneel, an altered and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory !

Vastness ! and Age ! and Memories of Eld !
Silence ! and Desolation ! and dim Night !
I feel ye now—I feel ye in your strength—
O spells more sure than e'er Judæan king
Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane !
O charms more potent than the rapt Chaldee
Ever drew down from out the quiet stars !

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls !
Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,
A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat !
Here, where the dames of Rome their gilded hair
Waved to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle !
Here, where on golden throne the monarch lolled,
Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,
Lit by the wan light of the hornèd moon,
The swift and silent lizard of the stones !

THE COLISEUM

But stay! these walls—these ivy-clad arcades—
These mouldering plinths—these sad and blackened
shafts—

These vague entablatures—this crumbling frieze—
These shattered cornices—this wreck—this ruin—
These stones—alas! these grey stones—are they all—
All of the famed, and the colossal left
By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?

“Not all”—the Echoes answer me—“not all!
Prophetic sounds and loud, arise for ever
From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise,
As melody from Memnon to the Sun.
We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule
With a despotic sway all giant minds.
We are not impotent—we pallid stones.
Not all our power is gone—not all our fame—
Not all the magic of our high renown—
Not all the wonder that encircles us—
Not all the mysteries that in us lie—
Not all the memories that hang upon
And cling around about us as a garment,
Clothing us in a robe of more than glory.”

DREAMLAND

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule—
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime
Out of SPACE—out of TIME.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods
With forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over;



WHERE AN EIDOLON NAMED NIGHT
ON A BLACK THRONE REIGNS UPRIGHT

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DREAMLAND

Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore ;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire ;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters—lone and dead,
Their still waters—still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead,—
Their sad waters, sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily,—
By the mountains—near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever,—
By the grey woods,—by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp,—
By the dismal tarns and pools

 Where dwell the Ghouls,—
By each spot the most unholy—
In each nook most melancholy,—
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past—
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by—
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven.

For the heart whose woes are legion
'Tis a peaceful, soothing region—
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'Tis—oh, 'tis an Eldorado !
But the traveller, travelling through it,
May not—dare not openly view it ;
Never its mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed ;
So wills its King, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid ;

DREAMLAND

And thus the sad Soul that here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.
By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have wandered home but newly
From this ultimate dim Thule.

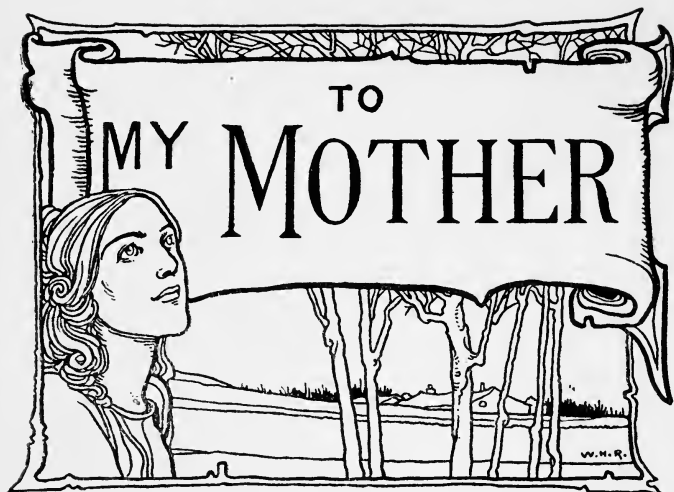
EULALIE



I DWELT alone
In a world of moan,
And mysoul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became
my blushing bride—
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie
became my smiling bride.

Ah, less—less bright
The stars of the night
Than the eyes of the radiant girl!
And never a flake
That the vapour can make
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's
most unregarded curl—
Can compare with the bright-eyed
Eulalie's most humble and care-
less curl.

Now Doubt—now Pain
Come never again,
For her soul gives me sigh for sigh,
And all day long
Shines, bright and strong,
Astarte within the sky,
While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron eye—
While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet eye.



BECAUSE I feel that, in the Heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you,
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother, my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.

ELDORADO

GAILY bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
“Shadow,” said he,
“Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?”

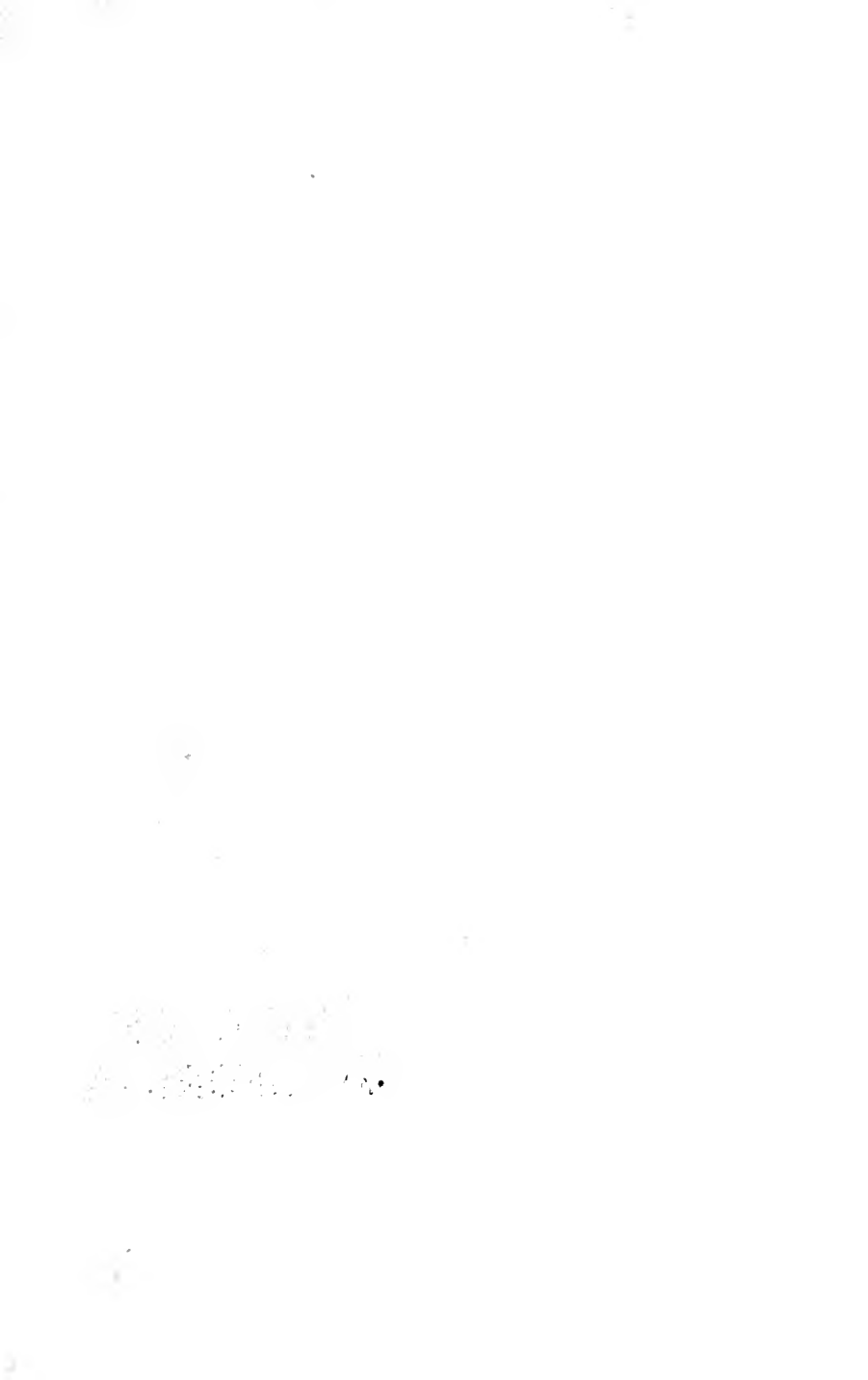
“Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,”
The shade replied,
“If you seek for Eldorado!”

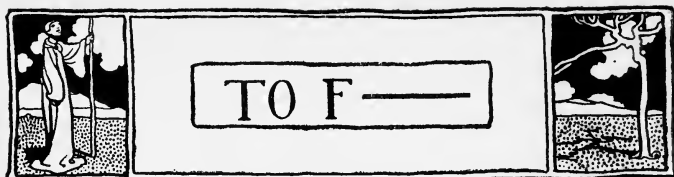




IN SEARCH OF EL DORADO

W. H. ROBINSON.





BELOVED! amid the earnest woes
That crowd around my earthly path—
(Drear path, alas! where grows
Not even one lonely rose)—
My soul at least a solace hath
In dreams of thee, and therein knows
An Eden of bland repose.

And thus thy memory is to me
Like some enchanted far-off isle
In some tumultuous sea—
Some ocean throbbing far and free
With storm—but where meanwhile
Serenest skies continually
Just o'er that one bright island smile.



TO ONE IN PARADISE

TO ONE IN PARADISE

THOU wast that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine.

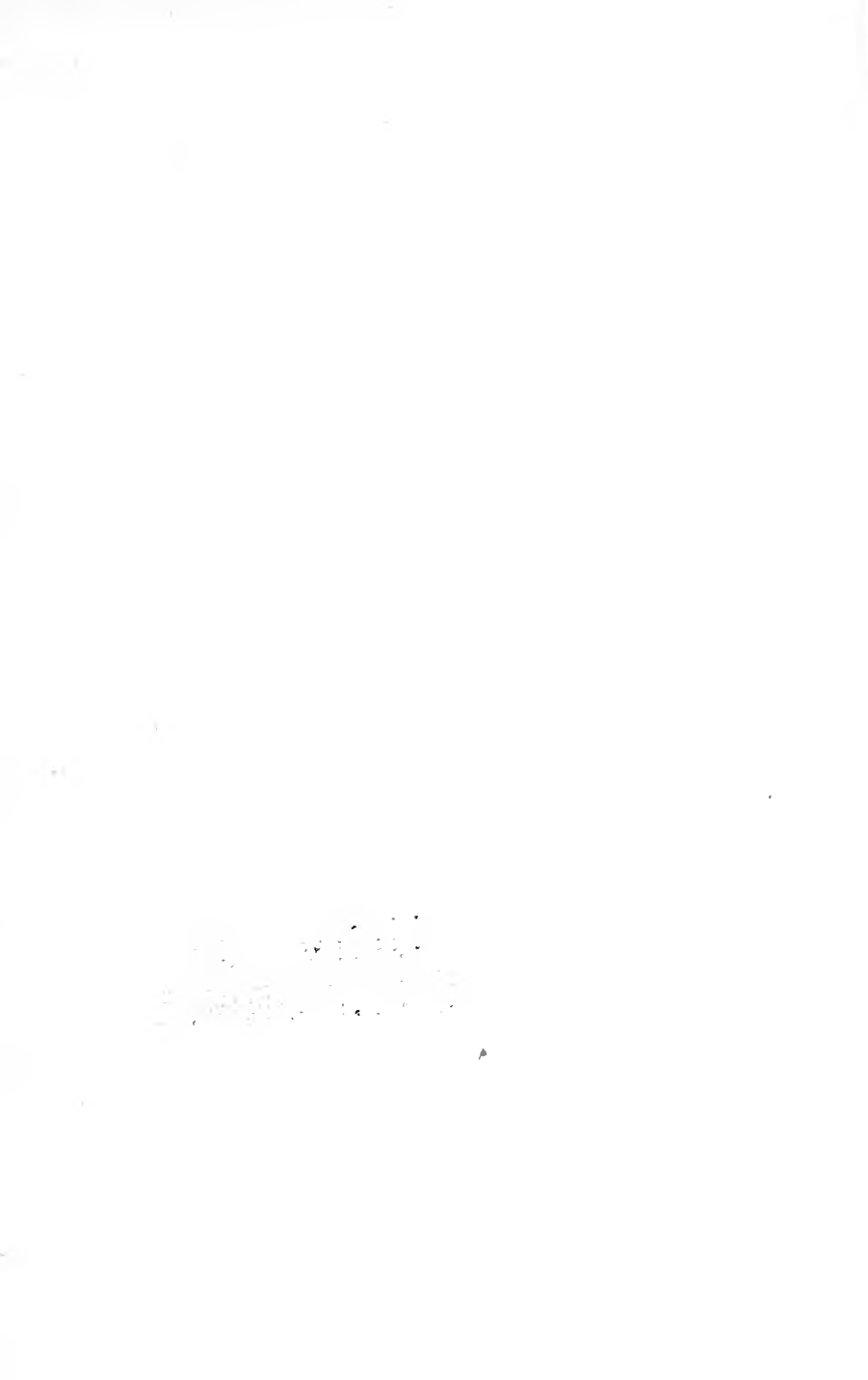
Ah, dream too bright to last !
Ah, starry Hope ! that didst arise
But to be overcast !
A voice from out the Future cries,
“ On ! on ! ”—but o'er the Past
(Dim gulf !) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast !

For, alas ! alas ! with me
The light of Life is o'er !
“ No more—no more—no more ”—
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar !

And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams—
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams !

Alas ! for that accursèd time
They bore thee o'er the billow,
From love to titled age and crime,
And an unholy pillow !—
From me, and from our misty clime,
Where weeps the silver willow !





HYMN

AT morn—at noon—at twilight dim—
Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!
In joy and woe—in good and ill—
Mother of God, be with me still!
When the Hours flew brightly by,
And not a cloud obscured the sky,
My soul, lest it should truant be,
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;
Now, when storms of Fate o'er cast
Darkly my Present and my Past,
Let my Future radiant shine
With sweet hopes of thee and thine!





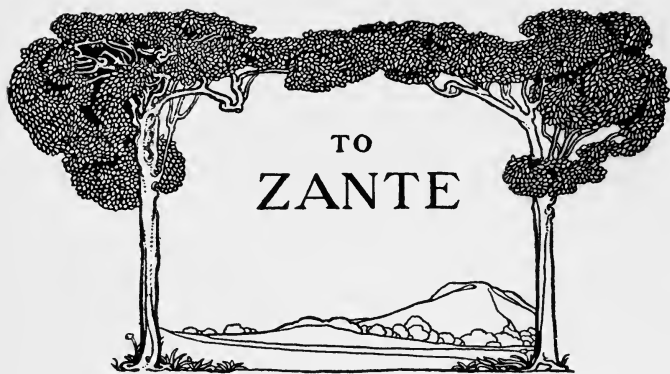
A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

TAKE this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream :
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less *gone*?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *all* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".



FAIR isle, that from the fairest of all flowers,
Thy gentlest of all gentle names dost take!
How many memories of what radiant hours
At sight of thee and thine at once awake!
How many scenes of what departed bliss!
How many thoughts of what entombed hopes!
How many visions of a maiden that is
No more—no more upon thy verdant slopes!
No more! alas, that magical sad sound
Transforming all! Thy charms shall please *no more*—
Thy memory *no more!* Accursèd ground
Henceforth I hold thy flower-enamelled shore,
O hyacinthine isle! O purple Zante!
“Isola d’oro! Fior di Levante!”



IN the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion—
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair!

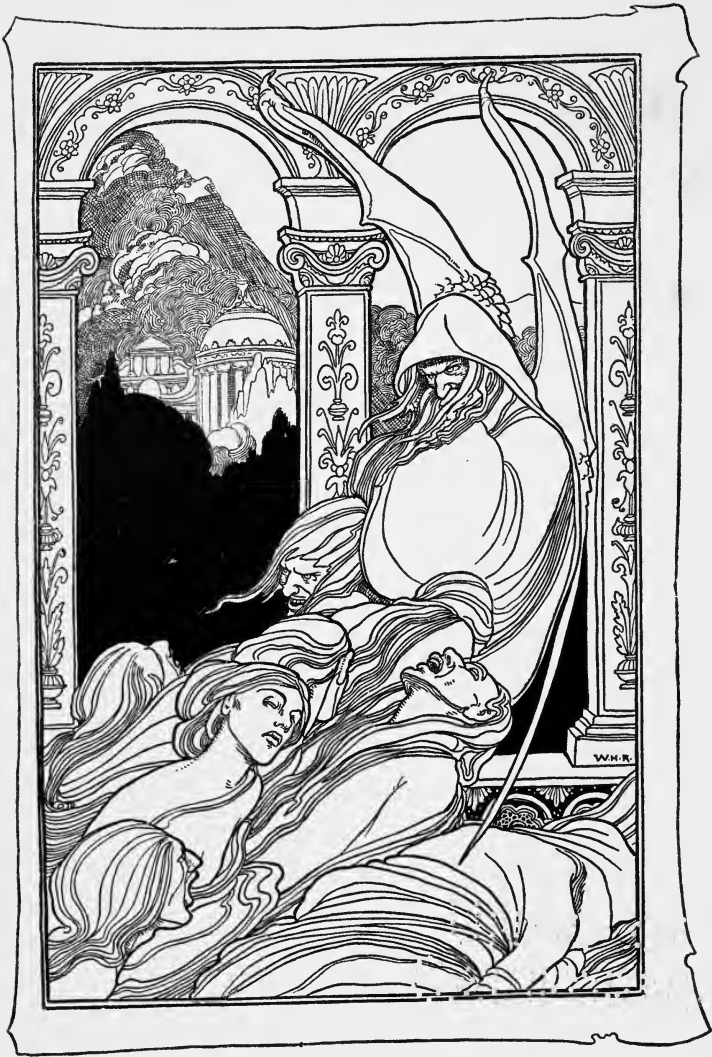
Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,
(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago,)
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A wingèd odour went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tuned law,
Round about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene!)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,



BUT EVIL THINGS, IN ROBES OF SORROW



ASSAILED THE MONARCH'S HIGH ESTATE

no people
anywhere else

THE HAUNTED PALACE

A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate ;
(Ah, let us mourn !—for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate !)
And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers now within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody ;
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out for ever
And laugh—but smile no more.



SILENCE

THERE are some qualities—some incorporate things,
That have a double life, which thus is made
A type of that twin entity which springs
From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.
There is a two-fold *Silence*—sea and shore—
Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,
Newly with grass o'ergrown ; some solemn graces,
Some human memories and tearful lore,
Render him terrorless : his name's "No More."
He is the corporate Silence : dread him not !
No power hath he of evil in himself ;
But should some urgent fate (untimely lot !)
Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,
That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
No foot of man), commend thyself to God !





W.H.R.

SILENCE

10

10



ISRAFEL

And the angel Israfael, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.—*Koran*.

IN Heaven a spirit doth dwell
 "Whose heart-strings are a lute ;"
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfael,
And the giddy Stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
 Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
 In her highest noon,
 The enamoured Moon
Blushes with love,
 While, to listen, the red levin
 (With the rapid Pleiads, even,
 Which were seven),
 Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
 And the other listening things)
That Israfael's fire
Is owing to that lyre
 By which he sits and sings—
The trembling living wire
 Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
 Where deep thoughts are a duty—
Where Love's a grown-up God—

ISRAFEL

Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song ;
To thee the laurels belong,
Best bard, because the wisest !
Merrily live and long !

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervour of thy lute—
Well may the stars be mute !

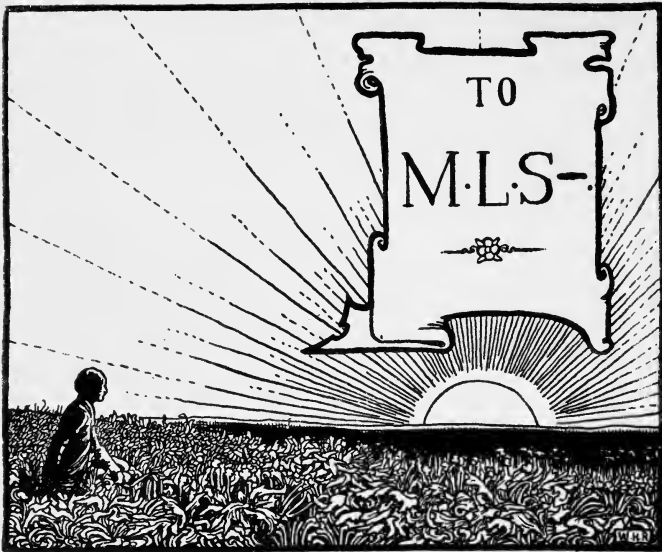
Yes, Heaven is thine ; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour ;
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

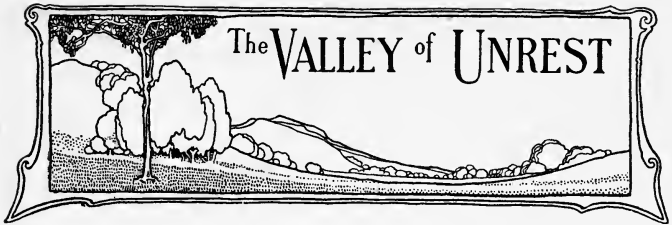


ISRAFEL

1000



OF all who hail thy presence as the morning—
Of all to whom thine absence is the night—
The blotting utterly from out high heaven
The sacred sun—of all who, weeping, bless thee
Hourly for hope—for life—ah, above all,
For the resurrection of deep buried faith
In truth, in virtue, in humanity—
Of all who, on despair's unhallowed bed
Lying down to die, have suddenly arisen
At thy soft-murmured words, "Let there be light!"
At thy soft-murmured words that were fulfilled
In the seraphic glancing of thine eyes—
Of all who owe thee most, whose gratitude
Nearest resembles worship,—oh, remember
The truest, the most fervently devoted,
And think that these weak lines are written by him—
By him who, as he pens them, thrills to think
His spirit is communing with an angel's.



ONCE it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell ;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars,
Nightly, from their azure towers,
To keep watch above the flowers,
In the midst of which all day
The red sunlight lazily lay.
Now each visitor shall confess
The sad valley's restlessness.
Nothing there is motionless—
Nothing save the airs that brood
Over the magic solitude.

Ah, by no wind are stirred those trees
That palpitate like the chill seas
Around the misty Hebrides !
Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
That rustle through the unquiet Heaven
Unceasingly, from morn till even,
Over the violets there that lie
In myriad types of the human eye—
Over the lilies there that wave
And weep above a nameless grave !
They wave :—from out their fragrant tops
Eternal dews come down in drops.
They weep :—from off their delicate stems
Perennial tears descend in gems.

POEMS
WRITTEN IN YOUTH



NOTE (1845)

Private reasons—some of which have reference to the sin of plagiarism, and others to the date of Tennyson's first poems—have induced me, after some hesitation, to republish these, the crude compositions of my earliest boyhood. They are printed *verbatim*—without alteration from the original edition—the date of which is too remote to be judiciously acknowledged.—E. A. P.

TO HELEN

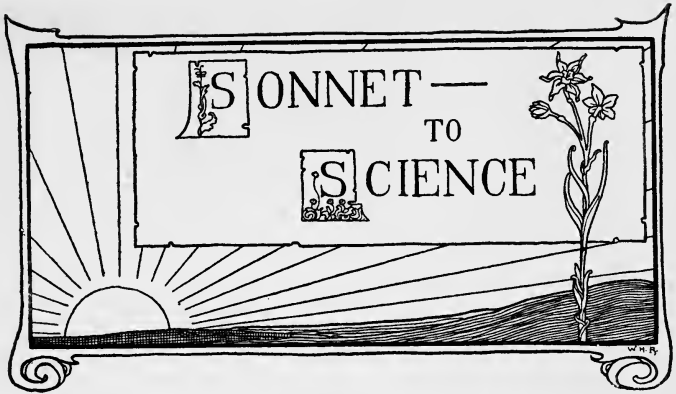
HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
To the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window niche,
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!



W.H.R.



SCIENCE! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?



THY soul shall find itself alone
'Mid dark thoughts of the grey tomb-stone—
Not one, of all the crowd, to pry
Into thine hour of secrecy.
Be silent in that solitude

Which is not loneliness—for then
The spirits of the dead who stood
In life before thee are again
In death around thee—and their will
Shall overshadow thee : be still.
The night—tho' clear—shall frown—
And the stars shall not look down
From their high thrones in the Heaven,
With light like Hope to mortals given—
But their red orbs, without beam,
To thy weariness shall seem
As a burning and a fever
Which would cling to thee for ever.
Now are thoughts thou shalt not banish—
Now are visions ne'er to vanish—
From thy spirit shall they pass
No more—like dew-drops from the grass.

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

The breeze—the breath of God—is still—
And the mist upon the hill
Shadowy—shadowy—yet unbroken,
Is a symbol and a token—
How it hangs upon the trees,
A mystery of mysteries !



'Twas noontide of summer,
And midtime of night,
And stars, in their orbits,
Shone pale, through the light
Of the brighter, cold moon,
'Mid planets her slaves,
Herself in the Heavens,
Her beam on the waves.

I gazed awhile
On her cold smile,
Too cold—too cold for me ;
There passed, as a shroud,
A fleecy cloud,
And I turned away to thee,
Proud Evening Star,
In thy glory afar
And dearer thy beam shall be ;
For joy to my heart
Is the proud part
Thou bearest in Heaven at night,
And more I admire
Thy distant fire,
Than that colder, lowly light.



W H Robinson.



DIM vales—and shadowy floods—
And cloudy-looking woods,
Whose forms we can't discover
For the tears that drip all over!
Huge moons there wax and wane—
Again—again—again—
Every moment of the night—
For ever changing places—
And they put out the star-light
With the breath from their pale faces.
About twelve by the moon-dial
One more filmy than the rest
(A kind which, upon trial,
They have found to be the best)
Comes down—still down—and down
With its centre on the crown
Of a mountain's eminence,
While its wide circumference
In easy drapery falls
Over hamlets, over halls,
Wherever they may be—
O'er the strange woods—o'er the sea—
Over spirits on the wing—
Over every drowsy thing—

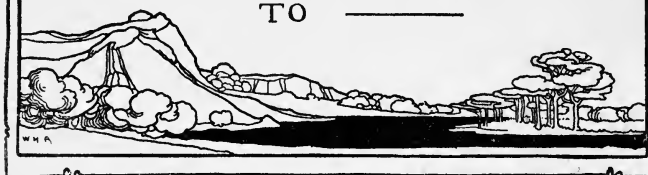
FAIRY LAND

And buries them up quite
In a labyrinth of light—
And then, how deep!—O, deep!
Is the passion of their sleep.
In the morning they arise,
And their moony covering
Is soaring in the skies,
With the tempests as they toss,
Like—almost any thing—
Or a yellow Albatross.
They use that moon no more
For the same end as before—
Videlicet a tent—
Which I think extravagant :
Its atomies, however,
Into a shower dissever,
Of which those butterflies,
Of Earth, who seek the skies,
And so come down again
(Never-contented things !)
Have brought a specimen
Upon their quivering wings.



THE LAKE-

TO ———



IN spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide world a spot:
The which I could not love the less—
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that towered around.

But when the Night had thrown her pall
Upon that spot, as upon all,
And the mystic wind went by
Murmuring in melody—
Then—ah, then, I would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.

Yet that terror was not fright,
But a tremulous delight—
A feeling not the jewelled mine
Could teach or bribe me to define—
Nor Love—although the Love were thine.

Death was in that poisonous wave,
And in its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining—
Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.



IN visions of the dark night
I have dreamed of joy departed—
But a waking dream of life and light
Hath left me broken-hearted.

Ah! what is not a dream by day
To him whose eyes are cast
On things around him with a ray
Turned back upon the past?

That holy dream—that holy dream,
While all the world were chiding,
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam,
A lonely spirit guiding.

What though that light, thro' storm and night,
So trembled from afar—
What could there be more purely bright
In Truth's day-star?



How shall the burial rite be read?
The solemn song be sung?
The requiem for the loveliest dead,
That ever died so young?

Her friends are gazing on her,
And on her gaudy bier,
And weep!—oh! to dishonour
Dead beauty with a tear!

They loved her for her wealth—
And they hated her for her pride—
But she grew in feeble health,
And they *love* her—that she died.

They tell me (while they speak
Of her “costly broider’d pall”)
That my voice is growing weak—
That I should not sing at all—

Or that my tone should be
Tuned to such solemn song

A PÆAN

So mournfully—so mournfully,
That the dead may feel no wrong.

But she is gone above,
With young Hope at her side,
And I am drunk with love
Of the dead, who is my bride.—

Of the dead—dead who lies
All perfumed there,
With the death upon her eyes,
And the life upon her hair.

Thus on the coffin loud and long
I strike—the murmur sent
Through the grey chambers to my song,
Shall be the accompaniment.

Thou diedst in thy life's June—
But thou didst not die too fair:
Thou didst not die too soon,
Nor with too calm an air.

From more than friends on earth,
Thy life and love are riven,
To join the untainted mirth
Of more than thrones in heaven.—

Therefore, to thee this night
I will no requiem raise,
But waft thee on thy flight,
With a Pæan of old days.



THE HAPPIEST DAY

THE happiest day—the happiest hour
My seared and blighted heart hath known,
The highest hope of pride and power,
I feel hath flown.

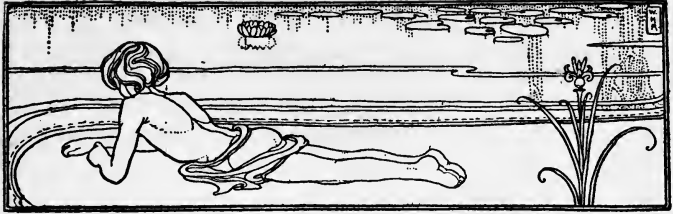
Of power! said I? Yes! such I ween
But they have vanished long, alas!
The visions of my youth have been—
But let them pass.

And pride, what have I now with thee?
Another brow may ev'n inherit
The venom thou hast poured on me—
Be still my spirit!

The happiest day—the happiest hour
Mine eyes shall see—have ever seen
The brightest glance of pride and power
I feel have been :

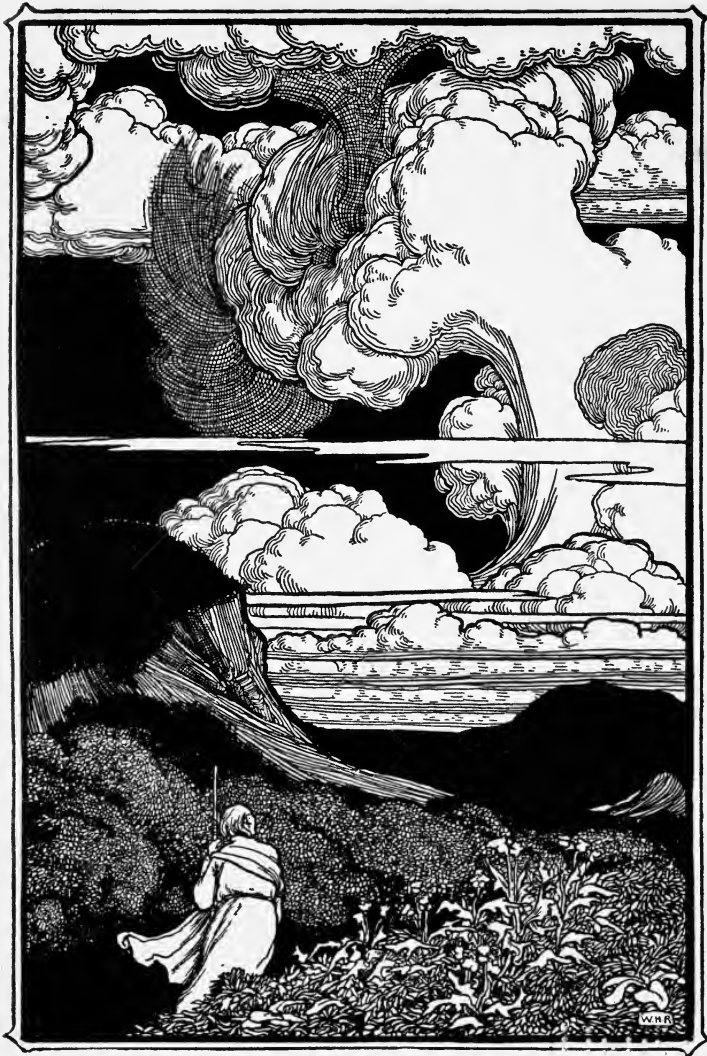
But were that hope of pride and power
Now offered with the pain
Ev'n *then* I felt—that brightest hour
I would not live again :

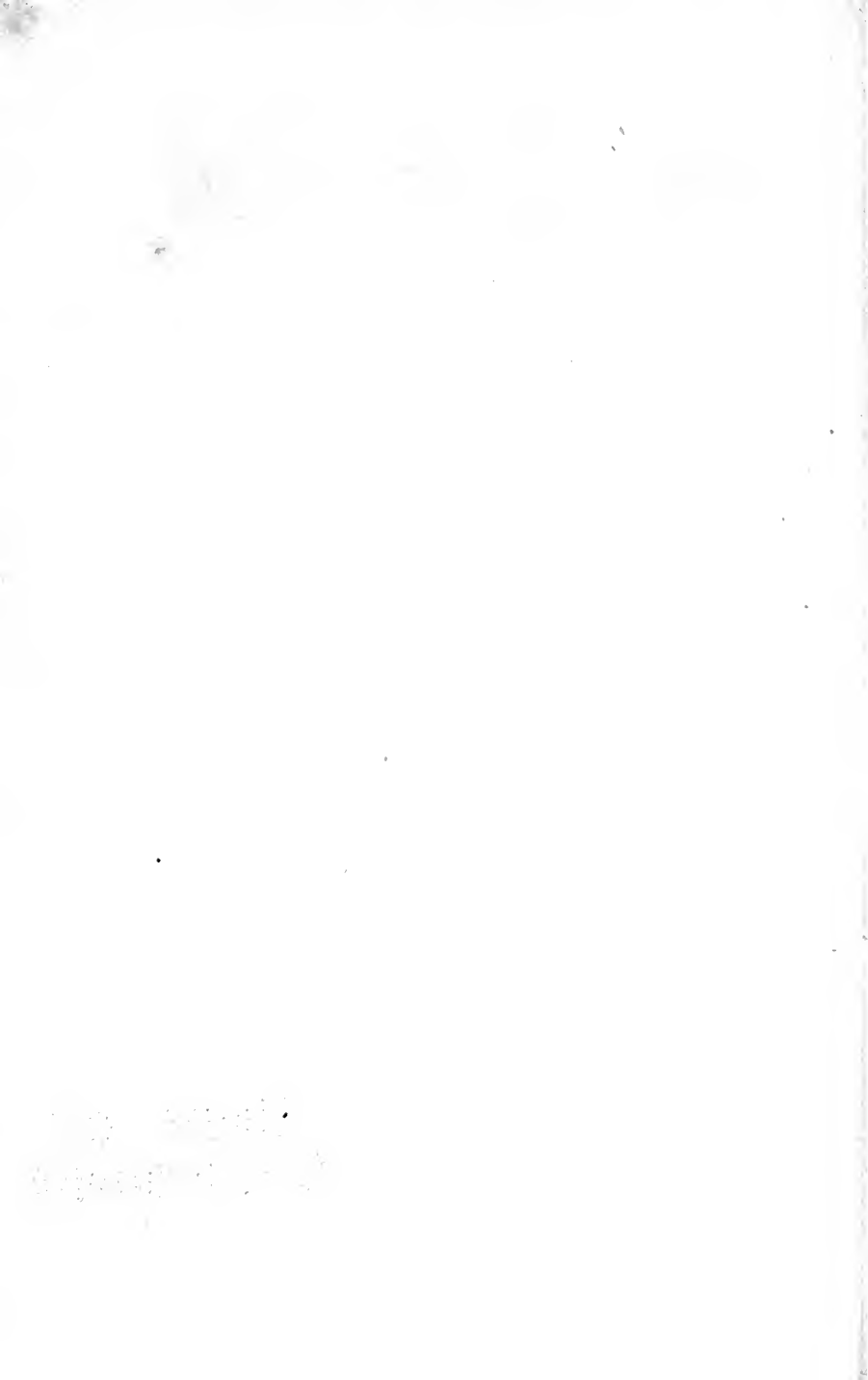
For on its wing was dark alloy
And as it fluttered—fell
An essence—powerful to destroy
A soul that knew it well.



ALONE

FROM childhood's hour I have not been
As others were—I have not seen
As others saw—I could not bring
My passions from a common spring.
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow—I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone—
And all I loved, / I loved alone.
Then—in my childhood—in the dawn
Of a most stormy life—was drawn
From every depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still—
From the torrent, or the fountain—
From the red cliff of the mountain—
From the sun that round me rolled
In its autumn tint of gold—
From the lightning in the sky
As it passed me flying by—
From the thunder and the storm—
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view.







*How often we forget all time, when lone
Admiring Nature's universal throne;
Her woods—her wilds—her mountains—the intense
Reply of Hers to Our intelligence!*

BYRON.

I

IN youth I have known one with whom the Earth
In secret communing held—as he with it,
In daylight, and in beauty, from his birth:
Whose fervid, flickering torch of life was lit
From the sun and stars, whence he had drawn forth
A passionate light such for his spirit was fit—
And yet that spirit knew not, in the hour
Of its own fervour, what had o'er it power.

II

Perhaps it may be that my mind is wrought
To a fever by the moonbeam that hangs o'er,
But I will half believe that wild light fraught
With more of sovereignty than ancient lore
Hath ever told—or is it of a thought
The unembodied essence, and no more
That with a quickening spell doth o'er us pass
As dew of the night-time o'er the summer grass?

III

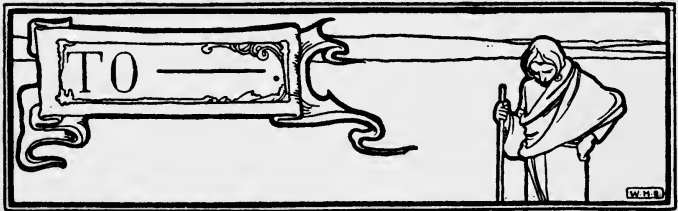
Doth o'er us pass, when, as th' expanding eye
To the loved object—so the tear to the lid
Will start, which lately slept in apathy?
And yet it need not be—that object—hid
From us in life, but common—which doth lie
Each hour before us—but then only bid

STANZAS

With a strange sound, as of a harp-string broken,
To awake us—'Tis a symbol and a token

IV

Of what in other worlds shall be—and given
In beauty by our God, to those alone
Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven,
Drawn by their heart's passion, and that tone,
That high tone of the spirit, which hath striven
Though not with Faith—with godliness—whose
throne
With desperate energy 't hath beaten down ;
Wearing its own deep feeling as a crown.



THE bowers whereat, in dreams, I see
The wantonest singing birds,
Are lips—and all thy melody
Of lip-begotten words—
Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrined
Then desolately fall,
O God! on my funereal mind
Like starlight on a pall—
Thy heart—*thy* heart!—I wake and sigh,
And sleep to dream till day
Of the truth that gold can never buy—
Of the baubles that it may.



FAIR river! in thy bright, clear flow
Of crystal, wandering water,
Thou art an emblem of the glow
Of beauty—the unhidden heart—
The playful mazes of art
In old Alberto's daughter;

But when within thy wave she looks—
Which glistens then, and trembles—
Why, then, the prettiest of brooks
Her worshipper resembles;
For in his heart, as in thy stream,
Her image deeply lies—
His heart which trembles at the beam
Of her soul-searching eyes.

TO —

I HEED not that my earthly lot
Hath little of Earth in it,
That years of love have been forgot
In the hatred of a minute:—
I mourn not that the desolate
Are happier, sweet, than I,
But that *you* sorrow for *my* fate
Who am a passer-by.

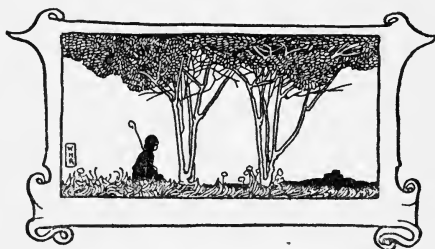


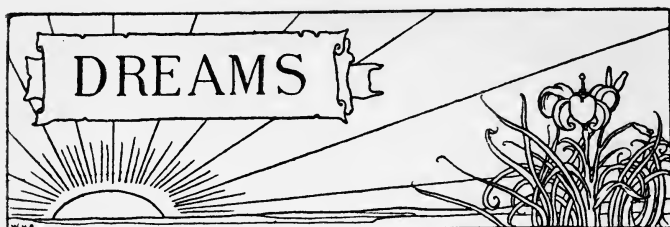
I SAW thee on thy bridal day—
When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee :

And in thine eye a kindling light
(Whatever it might be)
Was all on Earth my aching sight
Of loveliness could see.

That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame—
As such it well may pass—
Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
In the breast of him, alas !

Who saw thee on that bridal day,
When that deep blush *would* come o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee.





OH! that my young life were a lasting dream!
My spirit not awakening, till the beam
Of an Eternity should bring the morrow.
Yes! though that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,
'Twere better than the cold reality
Of waking life, to him whose heart must be,
And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,
A chaos of deep passion, from his birth.
But should it be—that dream eternally
Continuing—as dreams have been to me
In my young boyhood—should it thus be given,
'Twere folly still to hope for higher Heaven.
For I have revelled, when the sun was bright
In the summer sky, in dreams of living light
And loveliness,—have left my very heart
In climes of mine imagining, apart
From mine own home, with beings that have been
Of mine own thought—what more could I have seen?
'Twas once—and only once—and the wild hour
From my remembrance shall not pass—some power
Or spell had bound me—'twas the chilly wind
Came o'er me in the night, and left behind
Its image on my spirit—or the moon
Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon
Too coldly—or the stars—howe'er it was
That dream was as that night-wind—let it pass.
I have been happy, though in a dream.
I have been happy—and I love the theme:
Dreams! in their vivid colouring of life
As in that fleeting; shadowy, misty strife

DREAMS

Of semblance with reality, which brings
To the delirious eye more lovely things
Of Paradise and Love—and all our own!—
Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known.



ROMANCE

ROMANCE, who loves to nod and sing,
With drowsy head and folded wing,
Among the green leaves as they shake
Far down within some shadowy lake,
To me a painted paroquet
Hath been—a most familiar bird—
Taught me my alphabet to say—
To lisp my very earliest word
While in the wild wood I did lie,
A child—with a most knowing eye.

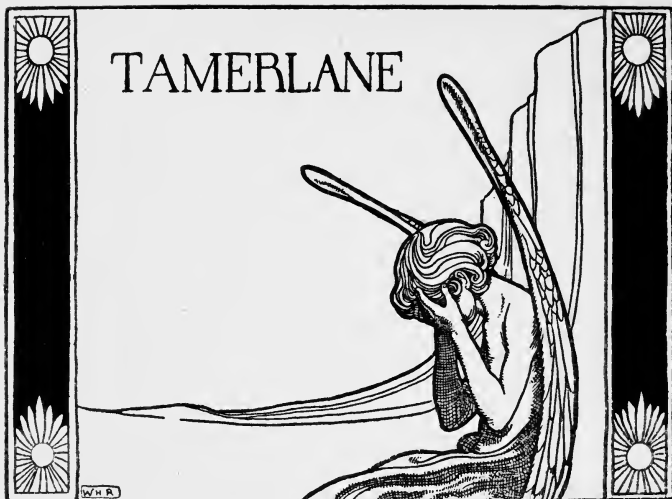
Of late, eternal condor years
So shake the very Heaven on high
With tumult as they thunder by,
I have no time for idle cares
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.
And when an hour with calmer wings
Its down upon my spirit flings—
That little time with lyre and rhyme
To while away—forbidden things!
My heart would feel to be a crime
Unless it trembled with the strings.

T

AMERLANE



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KIND solace in a dying hour !

Such, father, is not (now) my theme—
I will not madly deem that power
Of Earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revelled in—

I have no time to dote or dream :
You call it hope—that fire of fire !
It is but agony of desire :

If I *can* hope—O God ! I can—
Its fount is holier—more divine—
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But such is not a gift of thine.

Know thou the secret of a spirit
Bowed from its wild pride into shame.
O yearning heart ! I did inherit
Thy withering portion with the fame,
The searing glory which hath shone
Amid the jewels of my throne,

TAMERLANE

Halo of Hell ! and with a pain
Not Hell shall make me fear again—
O craving heart, for the lost flowers
And sunshine of my summer hours !
The undying voice of that dead time,
With its interminable chime,
Rings, in the spirit of a spell,
Upon thy emptiness—a knell.

I have not always been as now :
The fevered diadem on my brow
I claimed and won usurpingly—
Hath not the same fierce heirdom given
Rome to the Cæsar—this to me ?
The heritage of a kingly mind,
And a proud spirit which hath striven
Triumphantly with human kind.
On mountain soil I first drew life :
The mists of the Taglay have shed
Nightly their dews upon my head,
And, I believe, the wingèd strife
And tumult of the headlong air
Have nestled in my very hair.

So late from Heaven—that dew—it fell
(Mid dreams of an unholy night)
Upon me with the touch of Hell,
While the red flashing of the light
From clouds that hung, like banners, o'er,
Appeared to my half-closing eye
The pageantry of monarchy ;
And the deep trumpet-thunder's roar
Came hurriedly upon me, telling
Of human battle, where my voice,
My own voice, silly child !—was swelling
(O ! how my spirit would rejoice,
And leap within me at the cry)
The battle-cry of Victory !

TAMERLANE

The rain came down upon my head
Unsheltered—and the heavy wind
Rendered me mad and deaf and blind.
It was but man, I thought, who shed
Laurels upon me : and the rush—
The torrent of the chilly air
Gurgled within my ear the crush
Of empires—with the captive's prayer—
The hum of suitors—and the tone
Of flattery round a sovereign's throne.

My passions, from that hapless hour,
Usurped a tyranny which men
Have deemed since I have reached to power,
My innate nature—be it so :
But, father, there lived one who, then,
Then—in my boyhood—when their fire
Burned with a still intenser glow
(For passion must, with youth, expire)
E'en *then* who knew this iron heart
In woman's weakness had a part.

I have no words—alas!—to tell
The loveliness of loving well!
Nor would I now attempt to trace
The more than beauty of a face
Whose lineaments, upon my mind,
Are—shadows on th' unstable wind :
Thus I remember having dwelt
Some page of early lore upon,
With loitering eye, till I have felt
The letters—with their meaning—melt
To fantasies with none.

O, she was worthy of all love !
Love as in infancy was mine—
'Twas such as angel minds above
Might envy ; her young heart the shrine

TAMERLANE

On which my every hope and thought
Were incense—then a goodly gift,
For they were childish and upright—
Pure as her young example taught :
Why did I leave it, and, adrift,
Trust to the fire within, for light ?

We grew in age and love together—
Roaming the forest and the wild ;
My breast her shield in wintry weather—
And, when the friendly sunshine smiled
And she would mark the opening skies,
I saw no Heaven but in her eyes.
Young Love's first lesson is the heart :
For 'mid that sunshine, and those smiles,
When, from our little cares apart,
And laughing at her girlish wiles,
I'd throw me on her throbbing breast,
And pour my spirit out in tears—
There was no need to speak the rest—
No need to quiet any fears
Of her—who asked no reason why,
But turned on me her quiet eye !

Yet *more* than worthy of the love
My spirit struggled with, and strove,
When on the mountain peak alone
Ambition lent it a new tone—
I had no being but in thee :
The world, and all it did contain
In the earth—the air—the sea—
Its joy—its little lot of pain
That was new pleasure—the ideal,
Dim vanities of dreams by night—
And dimmer nothings which were real—
(Shadows, and a more shadowy light !)
Parted upon their misty wings,



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TAMERLANE

And so confusedly became
Thine image and—a name—a name!
Two separate yet most intimate things.

I was ambitious—have you known
The passion, father? You have not:
A cottager, I marked a throne
Of half the world as all my own,
And murmured at such lowly lot;
But, just like any other dream,
Upon the vapour of the dew
My own had past, did not the beam
Of beauty which did while it thro'
The minute—the hour—the day—oppress
My mind with double loveliness.

We walked together on the crown
Of a high mountain which looked down
Afar from its proud natural towers
Of rock and forest, on the hills—
The dwindled hills! begirt with bowers
And shouting with a thousand rills.

I spoke to her of power and pride,
But mystically—in such guise
That she might deem it nought beside
The moment's converse; in her eyes
I read, perhaps too carelessly,
A mingled feeling with my own—
The flush on her bright cheek, to me
Seemed to become a queenly throne
Too well that I should let it be
Light in the wilderness alone.

I wrapped myself in grandeur then,
And donned a visionary crown—
Yet it was not that Fantasy
Had thrown her mantle over me;

TAMERLANE

But that, among the rabble—men,
Lion ambition is chained down
And crouches to a keeper's hand :
Not so in deserts where the grand,
The wild, the terrible, conspire
With their own breath to fan his fire.

Look round thee now on Samarcand !—
Is she not queen of Earth ? her pride
Above all cities ? in her hand
Their destinies ? in all beside
Of glory which the world hath known
Stands she not nobly and alone ?
Falling—her veriest stepping-stone
Shall form the pedestal of a throne—
And who her sovereign ? Timour—he
Whom the astonished people saw
Striding o'er empires haughtily
A diademed outlaw !

O, human love ! thou spirit given,
On Earth, of all we hope in Heaven !
Which fall'st into the soul like rain
Upon the Siroc-withered plain,
And, failing in thy power to bless,
But leav'st the heart a wilderness !
Idea ! which bindest life around
With music of so strange a sound
And beauty of so wild a birth—
Farewell ! for I have won the Earth.

When Hope, the eagle that towered, could see
No cliff beyond him in the sky,
His pinions were bent droopingly—
And homeward turned his softened eye.
'Twas sunset : when the sun will part
There comes a sullenness of heart

TAMERLANE

To him who still would look upon
The glory of the summer sun.
That soul will hate the evening mist
So often lovely, and will list
To the sound of the coming darkness (known
To those whose spirits hearken) as one
Who, in a dream of night, *would* fly,
But *cannot*, from a danger nigh.

What tho' the moon—the white moon
Shed all the splendour of her noon?
Her smile is chilly—and her beam,
In that time of dreariness, will seem
(So like you gather in your breath)
A portrait taken after death.
And boyhood is a summer sun
Whose waning is the dreariest one—
For all we live to know is known,
And all we seek to keep hath flown.
Let life, then, as the day-flower, fall
With the noon-day beauty—which is all.

I reached my home—my home no more—
For all had flown who made it so.
I passed from out its mossy door,
And, tho' my tread was soft and low,
A voice came from the threshold stone
Of one whom I had earlier known—
O, I defy thee, Hell, to show
On beds of fire that burn below,
An humbler heart—a deeper woe.

Father, I firmly do believe—
I *know*—for Death who comes for me
From regions of the blest afar,
Where there is nothing to deceive,
Hath left his iron gate ajar,

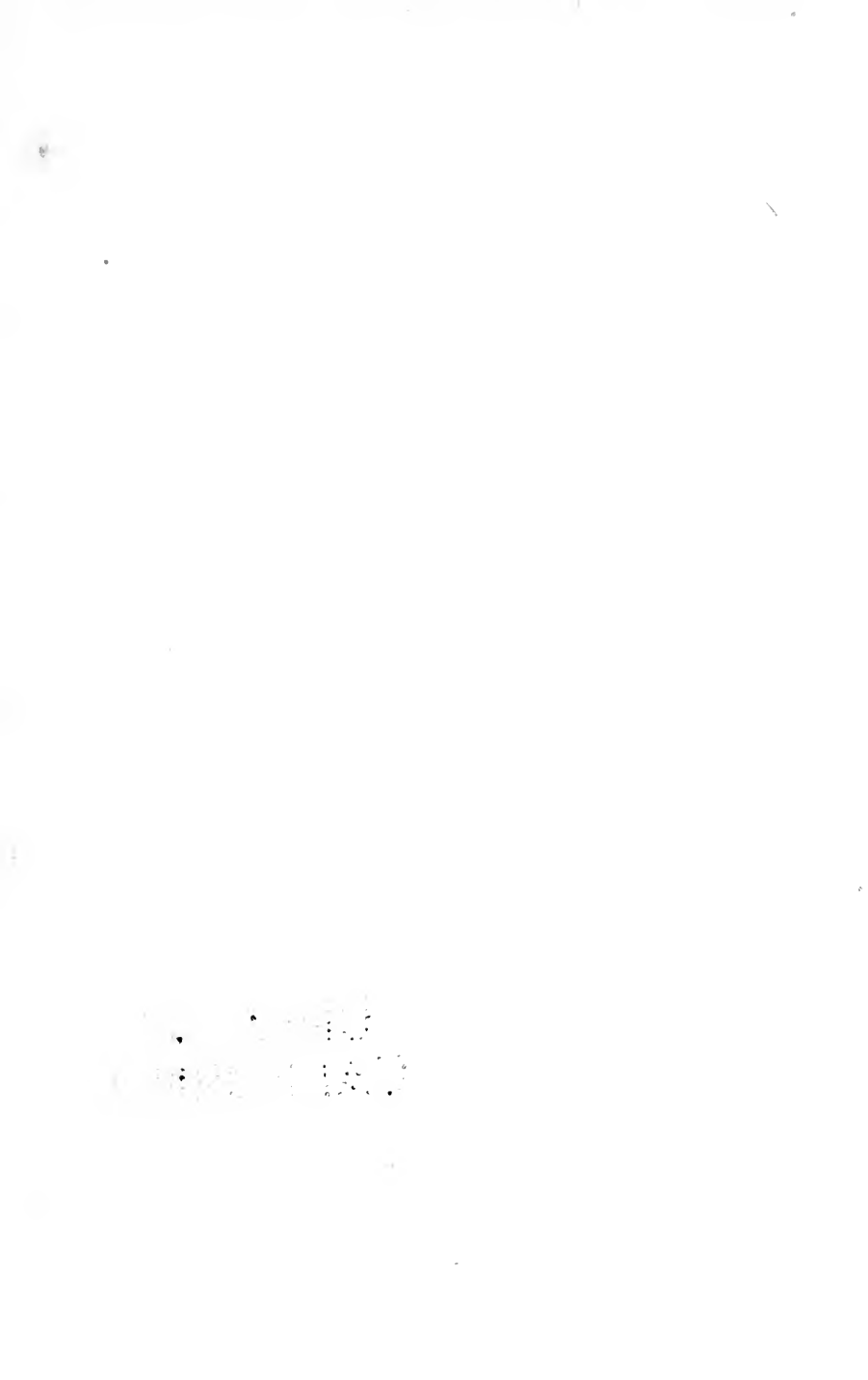
TAMERLANE

And rays of truth you cannot see
Are flashing thro' Eternity—
I do believe that Eblis hath
A snare in every human path ;
Else how, when in the holy grove
I wandered of the idol, Love,—
Who daily scents his snowy wings
With incense of burnt offerings
From the most unpolluted things,
Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven
Above with trellised rays from Heaven
No mote may shun—no tiniest fly—
The lightning of his eagle eye—
How was it that Ambition crept,
Unseen, amid the revels there,
Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt
In the tangles of Love's very hair ?



ALARA AF







O! NOTHING earthly save the ray
(Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye,
As in those gardens where the day
Springs from the gems of Circassy—
O! nothing earthly save the thrill
Of melody in woodland rill—
Or (music of the passion-hearted)
Joy's voice so peacefully departed
That like the murmur in the shell,
Its echo dwelleth and will dwell—
O! nothing of the dross of ours—
Yet all the beauty—all the flowers
That list our Love, and deck our bowers—
Adorn yon world afar, afar
The wandering star.

'Twas a sweet time for Nesace—for there
Her world lay lolling on the golden air,
Near four bright suns—a temporary rest—
An oasis in desert of the blest.
Away—away—'mid seas of rays that roll
Empyrean splendour o'er th' unchained soul—
The soul that scarce (the billows are so dense)
Can struggle to its destined eminence—

AL AARAAF

To distant spheres, from time to time, she rode,
And late to ours, the favoured one of God—
But, now, the ruler of an anchored realm,
She throws aside the sceptre—leaves the helm,
And, amid incense and high spiritual hymns,
Laves in quadruple light her angel limbs.

Now happiest, loveliest in yon lovely Earth,
Whence sprang the "Idea of Beauty" into birth,
(Falling in wreaths thro' many a startled star,
Like woman's hair 'mid pearls, until, afar,
It lit on hills Achaian, and there dwelt,)
She looked into Infinity—and knelt.
Rich clouds, for canopies, about her curled—
Fit emblems of the model of her world—
Seen but in beauty—not impeding sight—
Of other beauty glittering thro' the light—
A wreath that twined each starry form around,
And all the opal'd air in colour bound.

All hurriedly she knelt upon a bed
Of flowers : of lilies such as reared the head
On the fair Capo Deucato, and sprang
So eagerly around about to hang
Upon the flying footsteps of—deep pride—
Of her who loved a mortal—and so died.
The Sephalica, budding with young bees,
Upread its purple stem around her knees :
And gemmy flower, of Trebizond misnamed—
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it shamed
All other loveliness : its honied dew
(The fabled nectar that the heathen knew)
Deliriously sweet, was dropped from Heaven,
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond—and on a sunny flower
So like its own above that, to this hour,

AL AARAAF

It still remaineth, torturing the bee
With madness, and unwonted reverie :
In Heaven, and all its environs, the leaf
And blossom of the fairy plant, in grief
Disconsolate linger—grief that hangs her head,
Repenting follies that full long have fled,
Heaving her white breast to the balmy air,
Like guilty beauty, chastened, and more fair :
Nyctanthes, too, as sacred as the light
She fears to perfume, perfuming the night :
And Clytia pondering between many a sun,
While pettish tears adown her petals run :
And that aspiring flower that sprang on Earth—
And died, ere scarce exalted into birth,
Bursting its odorous heart in spirit to wing
Its way to Heaven, from garden of a king :
And Valisnerian lotus thither flown
From struggling with the waters of the Rhone :
And thy most lovely purple perfume, Zante !
Isola d'oro !—Fior di Levante !
And the Nelumbo bud that floats for ever
With Indian Cupid down the holy river—
Fair flowers, and fairy ! to whose care is given
To bear the Goddess' song, in odours, up to Heaven :

“ Spirit ! that dwellest where,
In the deep sky,
The terrible and fair,
In beauty vie !
Beyond the line of blue—
The boundary of the star
Which turneth at the view
Of thy barrier and thy bar—
Of the barrier overgone
By the comets who were cast
From their pride, and from their throne
To be drudges till the last—

AL AARAAF

To be carriers of fire
 (The red fire of their heart)
With speed that may not tire
 And with pain that shall not part—
Who livest—*that* we know—
 In Eternity—we feel—
But the shadow of whose brow
 What spirit shall reveal ?
Tho' the beings whom thy Nesace,
 Thy messenger hath known
Have dreamed for thy Infinity
 A model of their own—
Thy will is done, O God !
 The star hath ridden high
Thro' many a tempest, but she rode
 Beneath thy burning eye ;
And here, in thought, to thee—
 In thought that can alone
Ascend thy empire and so be
 A partner of thy throne—
By wingèd Fantasy,
 My embassy is given,
Till secrecy shall knowledge be
 In the environs of Heaven.”

She ceased—and buried then her burning cheek
Abashed, amid the lilies there, to seek
A shelter from the fervour of His eye ;
For the stars trembled at the Deity.
She stirred not—breathed not—for a voice was there
How solemnly pervading the calm air !
A sound of silence on the startled ear,
Which dreamy poets name “ the music of the sphere.”
Ours is a world of words : Quiet we call
“ Silence ”—which is the merest word of all.
All Nature speaks, and ev'n ideal things
Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings—



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AL AARAAF

But ah! not so when, thus, in realms on high
The eternal voice of God is passing by,
And the red winds are withering in the sky!

“What tho’ in worlds which sightless cycles run,
Linked to a little system, and one sun—
Where all my love is folly, and the crowd
Still think my terrors but the thunder cloud,
The storm, the earthquake, and the ocean-wrath—
(Ah! will they cross me in my angrier path?)
What tho’ in worlds which own a single sun
The sands of Time grow dimmer as they run,
Yet thine is my resplendency, so given
To bear my secrets thro’ the upper Heaven.
Leave tenantless thy crystal home, and fly,
With all thy train, athwart the moony sky—
Apart—like fire-flies in Sicilian night,
And wing to other worlds another light!
Divulge the secrets of thy embassy
To the proud orbs that twinkle—and so be
To every heart a barrier and a ban
Lest the stars totter in the guilt of man!”

Up rose the maiden in the yellow night,
The single-moonèd eve!—on Earth we plight
Our faith to one love, and one moon adore:
The birth-place of young Beauty had no more.
As sprang that yellow star from downy hours,
Up rose the maiden from her shrine of flowers,
And bent o’er sheeny mountain and dim plain
Her way—but left not yet her Therasæan reign.



HIGH on a mountain of enamelled head—
Such as the drowsy shepherd on his bed
Of giant pasturage lying at his ease,
Raising his heavy eyelid, starts and sees
With many a muttered "hope to be forgiven"
What time the moon is quadrated in Heaven—
Of rosy head that, towering far away
Into the sunlit ether, caught the ray
Of sunken suns at eve—at noon of night,
While the moon danced with the fair stranger light—
Upreared upon such height arose a pile
Of gorgeous columns on th' unburthened air,
Flashing from Parian marble that twin smile
Far down upon the wave that sparkled there,
And nursled the young mountain in its lair.
Of molten stars their pavement, such as fall
Thro' the ebon air, besilvering the pall
Of their own dissolution, while they die—
Adorning then the dwellings of the sky.
A dome, by linkèd light from Heaven let down,
Sat gently on these columns as a crown—
A window of one circular diamond, there,
Looked out above into the purple air,
And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
And hallowed all the beauty twice again,
Save when, between th' Empyrean and that ring,
Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing.
But on the pillars Seraph eyes have seen
The dimness of this world: that greyish green
That Nature loves the best for Beauty's grave
Lurked in each cornice, round each architrave—

AL AARAAF

And every sculptured cherub thereabout
That from his marble dwelling peerèd out,
Seemed earthly in the shadow of his niche—
Achaian statues in a world so rich ?
Friezes from Tadmor and Persepolis—
From Balbec, and the stilly, clear abyss
Of beautiful Gomorrah ! Oh, the wave
Is now upon thee—but too late to save !

Sound loves to revel in a summer night :
Witness the murmur of the grey twilight
That stole upon the ear, in Eyraco,
Of many a wild star-gazer long ago—
That stealeth ever on the ear of him
Who, musing, gazeth on the distance dim,
And sees the darkness coming as a cloud—
Is not its form—its voice—most palpable and loud ?

But what is this ?—it cometh—and it brings
A music with it—'tis the rush of wings—
A pause—and then a sweeping, falling strain,
And Nesace is in her halls again.
From the wild energy of wanton haste
Her cheeks were flushing, and her lips apart ;
The zone that clung around her gentle waist
Had burst beneath the heaving of her heart.
Within the centre of that hall to breathe
She paused and panted, Zante ! all beneath,
The fairy light that kissed her golden hair
And longed to rest, yet could but sparkle there !

Young flowers were whispering in melody
To happy flowers that night—and tree to tree ;
Fountains were gushing music as they fell
In many a star-lit grove, or moon-light dell ;
Yet silence came upon material things—
Fair flowers, bright waterfalls and angel wings—

AL AARAAF

And sound alone, that from the spirit sprang,
Bore burthen to the charm the maiden sang :

“ Neath blue-bell or streamer—
Or tufted wild spray
That keeps, from the dreamer,
The moonbeam away—
Bright beings ! that ponder,
With half-closing eyes,
On the stars which your wonder
Hath drawn from the skies,
Till they glance thro’ the shade, and
Come down to your brow
Like—eyes of the maiden
Who calls on you now—
Arise ! from your dreaming
In violet bowers,
To duty beseeiming
These star-litten hours—
And shake from your tresses
Encumbered with dew
The breath of those kisses
That cumber them too—
(O ! how, without you, Love !
Could angels be blest ?)
Those kisses of true love
That lulled ye to rest !
Up ! shake from your wing
Each hindering thing :
The dew of the night—
It would weigh down your flight ;
And true love caresses—
O ! leave them apart !
They are light on the tresses,
But lead on the heart.

“ Ligeia ! Ligeia !
My beautiful one !

AL AARAAF

Whose harshest idea
Will to melody run,
O! is it thy will
On the breezes to toss?
Or, capriciously still,
Like the lone Albatross,
Incumbent on night
(As she on the air)
To keep watch with delight
On the harmony there?

“Ligeia! wherever
Thy image may be,
No magic shall sever
Thy music from thee.
Thou hast bound many eyes
In a dreamy sleep—
But the strains still arise
Which thy vigilance keep—
The sound of the rain
Which leaps down to the flower,
And dances again
In the rhythm of the shower—
The murmur that springs
From the growing of grass
Are the music of things—
But are modelled, alas!—
Away, then, my dearest,
O! hie thee away
To springs that lie clearest
Beneath the moon-ray—
To lone lake that smiles,
In its dream of deep rest,
At the many star-isles
That enjewel its breast—
Where wild flowers, creeping,
Have mingled their shade,

AL AARAAF

On its margin is sleeping
Full many a maid—
Some have left the cool glade, and
Have slept with the bee—
Arouse them, my maiden,
On moorland and lea—
Go! breathe on their slumber,
All softly in ear,
The musical number
They slumbered to hear—
For what can awaken
An angel so soon
Whose sleep hath been taken
Beneath the cold moon,
As the spell which no slumber
Of witchery may test,
The rhythmical number
Which lulled him to rest?"

Spirits in wing, and angels to the view,
A thousand seraphs burst th' Empyrean thro',
Young dreams still hovering on their drowsy flight—
Seraphs in all but "Knowledge," the keen light
That fell, refracted, thro' thy bounds afar,
O Death! from eye of God upon that star:
Sweet was that error—sweeter still that death—
Sweet was that error—ev'n with *us* the breath
Of Science dims the mirror of our joy—
To them 'twere the Simoom, and would destroy.
For what (to them) availeth it to know
That Truth is Falsehood—or that Bliss is Woe?
Sweet was their death—with them to die was rife
With the last ecstasy of satiate life—
Beyond that death no immortality—
But sleep that pondereth and is not "to be"—
And there—oh! may my weary spirit dwell—
Apart from Heaven's Eternity—and yet how far from
Hell!

AL AARAAF

What guilty spirit, in what shrubbery dim,
Heard not the stirring summons of that hymn?
But two: they fell: for Heaven no grace imparts
To those who hear not for their beating hearts.
A maiden-angel and her seraph-lover—
O! where (and ye may seek the wide skies over)
Was Love, the blind, near sober Duty known?
Unguided Love hath fallen—'mid "tears of perfect
moan."

He was a goodly spirit—he who fell:
A wanderer by moss-y-mantled well—
A gazer on the lights that shine above—
A dreamer in the moonbeam by his love:
What wonder? for each star is eye-like there,
And looks so sweetly down on Beauty's hair—
And they, and every mossy spring were holy
To his love-haunted heart and melancholy.
The night had found (to him a night of woe)
Upon a mountain crag, young Angelo—
Beetling it bends athwart the solemn sky,
And scowls on starry worlds that down beneath it lie.
Here sate he with his love—his dark eye bent
With eagle gaze along the firmament:
Now turned it upon her—but ever then
It trembled to the orb of EARTH again.

"Ianthe, dearest, see! how dim that ray!
How lovely 'tis to look so far away!
She seemed not thus upon that autumn eve
I left her gorgeous halls—nor mourned to leave.
That eve—that eve—I should remember well—
The sun-ray dropped, in Lemnos with a spell
On th' Arabesque carving of a gilded hall
Wherein I sate, and on the draped wall—
And on my eye-lids—O, the heavy light!
How drowsily it weighed them into night!

AL AARAAF

On flowers, before, and mist, and love they ran
With Persian Saadi in his Gulistan :
But O, that light !—I slumbered—Death, the while,
Stole o'er my senses in that lovely isle
So softly that no single silken hair
Awoke that slept—or knew that he was there.

“ The last spot of Earth's orb I trod upon
Was a proud temple called the Parthenon ;
More beauty clung around her columned wall
Than even thy glowing bosom beats withal,
And when old Time my wing did disenthral
Thence sprang I—as the eagle from his tower,
And years I left behind me in an hour.
What time upon her airy bounds I hung,
One half the garden of her globe was flung
Unrolling as a chart unto my view—
Tenantless cities of the desert too !
Ianthe, beauty crowded on me then,
And half I wished to be again of men.”

“ My Angelo! and why of them to be ?
A brighter dwelling-place is here for thee—
And greener fields than in yon world above,
And woman's loveliness—and passionate love.”

“ But list, Ianthe! when the air so soft
Failed, as my pennoned spirit leapt aloft,
Perhaps my brain grew dizzy—but the world
I left so late was into chaos hurled,
Sprang from her station, on the winds apart,
And rolled a flame, the fiery Heaven athwart.
Methought, my sweet one, then I ceased to soar,
And fell—not swiftly as I rose before,
But with a downward, tremulous motion thro'
Light, brazen rays, this golden star unto !
Nor long the measure of my falling hours,
For nearest of all stars was thine to ours—

AL AARAAF

Dread star! that came, amid a night of mirth,
A red Dædalion on the timid Earth."

"We came—and to thy Earth—but not to us
Be given our lady's bidding to discuss:
We came, my love; around, above, below,
Gay fire-fly of the night, we come and go,
Nor ask a reason save the angel-nod
She grants to us as granted by her God.
But, Angelo, than thine grey Time unfurled
Never his fairy wing o'er fairer world!
Dim was its little disk, and angel eyes
Alone could see the phantom in the skies,
When first Al Aaraaf knew her course to be
Headlong thitherward o'er the starry sea—
But when its glory swelled upon the sky,
As glowing Beauty's bust beneath man's eye,
We paused before the heritage of men,
And thy star trembled—as doth Beauty then!"

Thus in discourse, the lovers whiled away
The night that waned and waned and brought no day.
They fell: for Heaven to them no hope imparts
Who hear not for the beating of their hearts.



NOTES TO AL AARAAF



Page 129. *Al Aaraaf*. A star was discovered by Tycho Brahe which appeared suddenly in the heavens—attained, in a few days, a brilliancy surpassing that of Jupiter—then as suddenly disappeared, and has never been seen since.

Page 130. *Capo Deucato*. On Santa Maura—olim Deucadia.

Page 130. *Her who loved a mortal—and so died*. Sappho.

Page 130. *And gemmy flower, of Trebizond misnamed*. This flower is much noticed by Lewenhoeck and Tournefort. The bee, feeding upon its blossom, becomes intoxicated.

Page 131. *Clytia*. Clytia—the Chrysanthemum Peruvianum, or, to employ a better-known term, the turnsol—which turns continually towards the sun, covers itself, like Peru, the country from which it comes, with dewy clouds, which cool and refresh its flowers during the most violent heat of the day.—*B. de St. Pierre*.

Page 131. *That aspiring flower that sprang on Earth*. There is cultivated in the king's garden at Paris, a species of serpentine aloe without prickles, whose large and beautiful flower exhales a strong odour of the vanilla, during the time of its expansion, which is very short. It does not blow till towards the month of July—you then perceive it gradually open its petals—expand them—fade and die.—*St. Pierre*.

NOTES TO AL AARAAF

Page 131. *Valisnerian lotus*. There is found, in the Rhone, a beautiful lily of the Valisnerian kind. Its stem will stretch to the length of three or four feet—thus preserving its head above water in the swellings of the river.

Page 131. *Thy most lovely purple perfume*. The Hyacinth.

Page 131. *The Nelumbo bud*. It is a fiction of the Indians, that Cupid was first seen floating in one of these down the river Ganges, and that he still loves the cradle of his childhood.

Page 131. *To bear the Goddess' song, etc.* And golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of the saints.—*Rev. St. John*.

Page 132. *A model of their own*. The Humanitarians held that God was to be understood as having really a human form.—*Vide Clarke's Sermons*, vol. i., page 26, fol. edit.

The drift of Milton's argument leads him to employ language which would appear, at first sight, to verge upon their doctrine; but it will be seen immediately, that he guards himself against the charge of having adopted one of the most ignorant errors of the dark ages of the Church.—*Dr. Sumner's Notes on Milton's Christian Doctrine*.

This opinion, in spite of many testimonies to the contrary, could never have been very general. Andeus, a Syrian of Mesopotamia, was condemned for the opinion, as heretical. He lived in the beginning of the fourth century. His disciples were called Anthropomorphites.—*Vide du Pin*.

Among Milton's minor poems are these lines :

Dicite sacrorum præsidēs nemorum Deæ, etc.
 Quis ille primus cujus ex imagine
 Natura solers finxit humanum genus?
 Eternus, incorruptus, æquævus polo,
 Unusque et universus exemplar Dei.

And afterwards—

Non cui profundum Cæcitas lumen dedit
 Dirçæus augur vidit hunc alto sinu, etc.

Page 132. *Winged Fantasy*.

Seltsamen Tochter Jovis
 Seinem Schosskinde
 Der Phantasie.—*Goethe*.

Page 135. *Sightless cycles*. Sightless—too small to be seen.—*Legge*.

Page 135. *Fire-flies*. I have often noticed a peculiar movement of the fire-flies;—they will collect in a body and fly off, from a common centre, into innumerable radii.

NOTES TO AL AARAAF

Page 135. *Therasæan reign.* Therasæa, or Therasea, the island mentioned by Seneca, which, in a moment, arose from the sea to the eyes of astonished mariners.

Page 136. *Molten stars, etc.*

Some star which, from the ruined roof
Of shaken Olympus, by mischance did fall.—*Milton.*

Page 137. *Persepolis.* Voltaire, in speaking of Persepolis, says, "Je connois bien l'admiration qu'inspirent ces ruines—mais un palais érigé au pied d'une chaîne des rochers sterils—peut il être un chef d'œuvre des arts?"

Page 137. *Gomorrah.* Ula Deguisi is the Turkish appellation; but, on its own shores, it is called Bahar Loth, or Almotanah. There were undoubtedly more than two cities engulfed in the "dead sea." In the valley of Siddim were five—Adrah, Zeboin, Zoar, Sodom and Gomorrah. Stephen of Byzantium mentions eight, and Strabo thirteen (engulfed)—but the last is out of all reason.

It is said [Tacitus, Strabo, Josephus, Daniel of St. Saba, Nau, Maundrell, Troilo, D'Arvieux], that after an excessive drought, the vestiges of columns, walls, etc., are seen above the surface. At any season, such remains may be discovered by looking down into the transparent lake, and at such distances as would argue the existence of many settlements in the space now usurped by the "Asphaltites."

Page 137. *Eyraco.* Chaldea.

Page 137. *Palpable and loud.* I have often thought I could distinctly hear the sound of the darkness as it stole over the horizon.

Page 137. *Young flowers were whispering, etc.* Fairies use flowers for their charactery.—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Page 138. *The moonbeam.* In Scripture is this passage—"The sun shall not harm thee by day, nor the moon by night." It is, perhaps, not generally known that the moon, in Egypt, has the effect of producing blindness to those who sleep with the face exposed to its rays, to which circumstance the passage evidently alludes.

Page 139. *The lone Albatross.* The Albatross is said to sleep on the wing.

Page 139. *The murmur that springs, etc.* I met with this idea in an old English tale, which I am now unable to obtain and quote from memory:—"The verie essence and, as it were, springe-head and origine of all musiche is the verie pleasaunte sounde which the trees of the forest do make when they growe."

NOTES TO AL AARAAF

Page 140. *Have slept with the bee.* The wild bee will not sleep in the shade if there be moonlight.

The rhyme in this verse, as in one about sixty lines before, has an appearance of affectation. It is, however, imitated from Sir W. Scott, or rather from Claud Halcro—in whose mouth I admired its effect :

O ! were there an island,
Tho' ever so wild,
Where woman might smile, and
No man be beguiled, etc.

Page 141. *Apart from Heaven's Eternity—and yet how far from Hell.* With the Arabians there is a medium between Heaven and Hell, where men suffer no punishment, but yet do not attain that tranquil and even happiness which they suppose to be characteristic of heavenly enjoyment.

Un no rompido sueno—
Un dia puro—allegre—libre
Quiera—
Libre de amor—de zelo—
De odio—de esperanza—de rezelo.

Luis Ponce de Leon.

Sorrow is not excluded from "Al Aaraaf," but it is that sorrow which the living love to cherish for the dead, and which, in some minds, resembles the delirium of opium. The passionate excitement of Love and the buoyancy of spirit attendant upon intoxication are its less holy pleasures—the price of which, to those souls who make choice of "Al Aaraaf" as their residence after life, is final death and annihilation.

Page 141. *Tears of perfect moan.*

There be tears of perfect moan
Wept for thee in Helicon.—*Milton.*

Page 142. *The Parthenon.* It was entire in 1687—the most elevated spot in Athens.

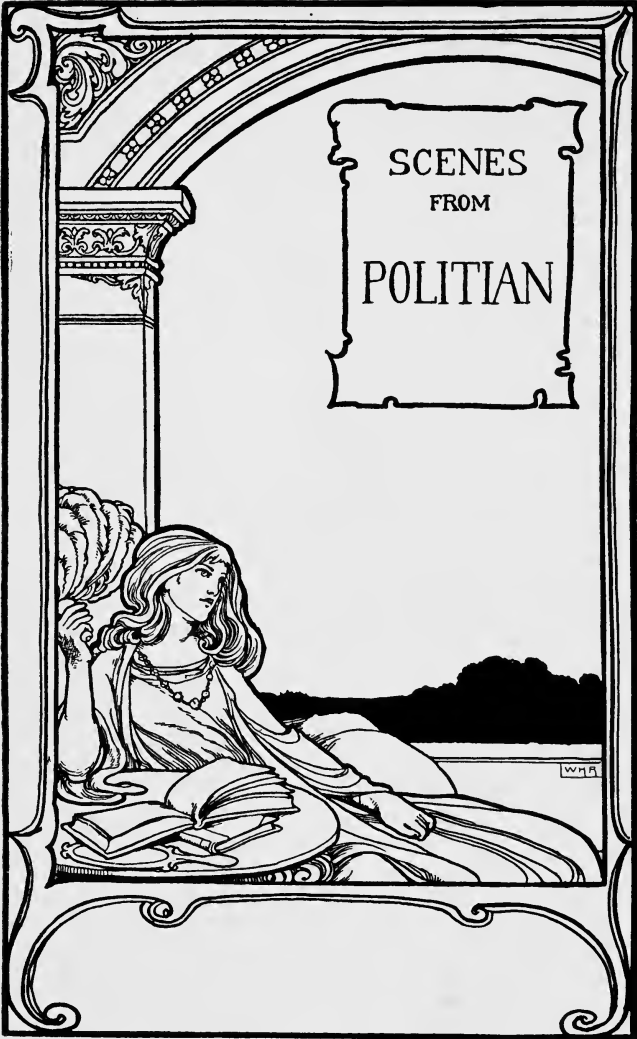
Page 142. *More beauty clung, etc.*

Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.

Marlowe.

Page 142. *My pennoned spirit.* Pennon, for pinion.—*Milton.*

SCENES
FROM
POLITIAN







I

ROME.—A Hall in a Palace. ALESSANDRA and CASTIGLIONE.

Alessandra. Thou art sad, Castiglione.

Castiglione. Sad!—not I.

Oh, I'm the happiest, happiest man in Rome!
A few days more, thou knowest, my Alessandra,
Will make thee mine. Oh, I am very happy!

Aless. Methinks thou hast a singular way of showing
Thy happiness—what ails thee, cousin of mine?
Why didst thou sigh so deeply?

Cas. Did I sigh?

I was not conscious of it. It is a fashion,
A silly—a most silly fashion I have
When I am *very* happy. Did I sigh? (*sighing.*)

Aless. Thou didst. Thou art not well. Thou hast
indulged

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Too much of late, and I am vexed to see it.
 Late hours and wine, Castiglione,—these
 Will ruin thee! thou art already altered—
 Thy looks are haggard—nothing so wears away
 The constitution as late hours and wine.

Cas. (musing). Nothing, fair cousin, nothing—not
 even deep sorrow—

Wears it away like evil hours and wine.
 I will amend.

Aless. Do it! I would have thee drop
 Thy riotous company, too—fellows low born;
 Ill suit the like with old Di Broglio's heir
 And Alessandra's husband.

Cas. I will drop them.

Aless. Thou wilt—thou must. Attend thou also
 more

To thy dress and equipage—they are over plain
 For thy lofty rank and fashion—much depends
 Upon appearances.

Cas. I'll see to it.

Aless. Then see to it!—pay more attention, sir,
 To a becoming carriage—much thou wantest
 In dignity.

Cas. Much, much, oh, much I want
 In proper dignity.

Aless. (haughtily). Thou mockest me, sir!

Cas. (abstractedly). Sweet, gentle Lalage!

Aless. Heard I aright?

I speak to him—he speaks of Lalage!

Sir Count! (*places her hand on his shoulder*) what art
 thou dreaming? He's not well!

What ails thee, sir?

Cas. (starting). Cousin! fair cousin!—madam!
 I crave thy pardon—indeed I am not well—
 Your hand from off my shoulder, if you please.
 This air is most oppressive!—Madam—the Duke

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Enter Di Broglio.

Di Broglio. My son, I've news for thee!—hey?—
what's the matter? (*observing Alessandra.*)
I' the pouts? Kiss her, Castiglione! kiss her,
You dog! and make it up, I say, this minute!
I've news for you both. Politian is expected
Hourly in Rome—Politian, Earl of Leicester!
We'll have him at the wedding. 'Tis his first visit
To the imperial city.

Aless. What! Politian
Of Britain, Earl of Leicester?

Di Brog. The same, my love.
We'll have him at the wedding. A man quite young
In years, but grey in fame. I have not seen him
But rumour speaks of him as of a prodigy
Pre-eminent in arts, and arms, and wealth,
And high descent. We'll have him at the wedding.

Aless. I have heard much of this Politian.
Gay, volatile and giddy—is he not,
And little given to thinking?

Di Brog. Far from it, love.
No branch, they say, of all philosophy
So deep abstruse he has not mastered it.
Learnèd as few are learnèd.

Aless. 'Tis very strange!
I have known men have seen Politian
And sought his company. They speak of him
As of one who entered madly into life,
Drinking the cup of pleasure to the dregs.

Cas. Ridiculous! Now I have seen Politian
And know him well—nor learned nor mirthful he.
He is a dreamer, and a man shut out
From common passions.

Di Brog. Children, we disagree.
Let us go forth and taste the fragrant air

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Of the garden. Did I dream, or did I hear
Politian was a *melancholy* man? (*Exeunt.*)

II

ROME.—A Lady's Apartment, with a window open and looking into a garden. LALAGE, in deep mourning, reading at a table on which lie some books and a hand-mirror. In the background JACINTA (a servant maid) leans carelessly upon a chair.

Lalage. Jacinta! is it thou?

Jacinta (*pertly*). Yes, ma'am, I'm here.

Lal. I did not know, Jacinta, you were in waiting.
Sit down!—let not my presence trouble you—
Sit down!—for I am humble, most humble.

Jac. (*aside*). 'Tis time.

(Jacinta seats herself in a side-long manner upon the chair, resting her elbows upon the back, and regarding her mistress with a contemptuous look. Lalage continues to read.)

Lal. "It in another climate, so he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not i' this soil!"
(pauses—turns over some leaves, and resumes.)

"No lingering winters there, nor snow, nor shower—
But Ocean ever to refresh mankind
Breathes the shrill spirit of the western wind."
Oh, beautiful!—most beautiful!—how like
To what my fevered soul doth dream of Heaven!
O happy land! (*pauses*) She died!—the maiden died!
O still more happy maiden who couldst die!
Jacinta!

(Jacinta returns no answer, and Lalage presently resumes.)

Again!—a similar tale
Told of a beauteous dame beyond the sea!

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Thus speaketh one Ferdinand in the words of the play—

"She died full young"—one Bossola answers him—
 "I think not so—her infelicity
 Seemed to have years too many"—Ah, luckless lady!
 Jacinta! (*still no answer*).

Here's a far sterner story—
 But like—oh, very like in its despair—
 Of that Egyptian queen, winning so easily
 A thousand hearts—losing at length her own.
 She died. Thus endeth the history—and her maids
 Lean over her and weep—two gentle maids
 With gentle names—Eiros and Charmion!
 Rainbow and Dove!—Jacinta!

Jac. (*pettishly*). Madam, what *is* it?

Lal. Wilt thou, my good Jacinta, be so kind
 As go down in the library and bring me
 The Holy Evangelists?

Jac. Pshaw! (*Exit.*)

Lal. If there be balm
 For the wounded spirit in Gilead, it is there!
 Dew in the night time of my bitter trouble
 Will there be found—"dew sweeter far than that
 Which hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill."

(*re-enter Jacinta, and throws a volume on the table.*)

Jac. There, ma'am, 's the book. (*aside.*) Indeed she
 is very troublesome.

Lal. (*astonished*). What didst thou say, Jacinta?
 Have I done aught

To grieve thee or to vex thee?—I am sorry.
 For thou hast served me long and ever been
 Trustworthy and respectful. (*resumes her reading.*)

Jac. (*aside.*) I can't believe
 She has any more jewels—no—no—she gave me all.

Lal. What didst thou say, Jacinta? Now I be-
 think me

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Thou hast not spoken lately of thy wedding.
 How fares good Ugo?—and when is it to be?
 Can I do aught?—is there no further aid
 Thou needest, Jacinta?

Jac. (aside.) Is there no *further* aid?
 That's meant for me. (*aloud.*) I'm sure, madam, you
 need not

Be always throwing those jewels in my teeth.

Lal. Jewels! Jacinta,—now indeed, Jacinta,
 I thought not of the jewels.

Jac. Oh, perhaps not!
 But then I might have sworn it. After all,
 There's Ugo says the ring is only paste,
 For he's sure the Count Castiglione never
 Would have given a real diamond to such as you;
 And at the best I'm certain, madam, you cannot
 Have use for jewels *now*. But I might have sworn it.

(Exit.)

*(Lalage bursts into tears and leans her head
 upon the table—after a short pause raises it.)*

Lal. Poor Lalage!—and is it come to this?
 Thy servant maid!—but courage!—'tis but a viper
 Whom thou hast cherished to sting thee to the soul!
(taking up the mirror.)

Ha! here at least's a friend—too much a friend
 In earlier days—a friend will not deceive thee.
 Fair mirror and true! now tell me (for thou canst)
 A tale—a pretty tale—and heed thou not
 Though it be rife with woe. It answers me.
 It speaks of sunken eyes, and wasted cheeks,
 And Beauty long deceased—remembers me,
 Of Joy departed—Hope, the Seraph Hope,
 Inurned and entombed!—now, in a tone
 Low, sad, and solemn, but most audible,
 Whispers of early grave untimely yawning
 For ruined maid. Fair mirror and true!—thou liest
 not!

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"



*Thou hast no end to gain—no heart to break—
Castiglione lied who said he loved—
Thou true—he false!—false!—false!*

(While she speaks, a monk enters her apartment and approaches unobserved.)

Monk. Refuge thou hast,
Sweet daughter! in Heaven. Think of eternal things!
Give up thy soul to penitence, and pray!

Lal. (arising hurriedly). I cannot pray!—My soul
is at war with God!

The frightful sounds of merriment below
Disturb my senses—go! I cannot pray—

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

The sweet airs from the garden worry me!
 Thy presence grieves me—go!—thy priestly raiment
 Fills me with dread—thy ebony crucifix
 With horror and awe!

Monk. Think of thy precious soul!

Lal. Think of my early days!—think of my father
 And mother in Heaven! think of our quiet home,
 And the rivulet that ran before the door!
 Think of my little sisters!—think of them!
 And think of me!—think of my trusting love
 And confidence—his vows—my ruin—think—think
 Of my unspeakable misery!—begone!
 Yet stay! yet stay!—what was it thou saidst of prayer
 And penitence? Didst thou not speak of faith
 And vows before the throne?

Monk. I did.

Lal. 'Tis well.

There *is* a vow 'twere fitting should be made—
 A sacred vow, imperative and urgent,
 A solemn vow!

Monk. Daughter, this zeal is well!

Lal. Father, this zeal is anything but well!
 Hast thou a crucifix fit for this thing?

A crucifix whereon to register

This sacred vow? *(he hands her his own.)*

Not that—Oh! no!—no!—no! *(shuddering.)*

Not that! Not that!—I tell thee, holy man,
 Thy raiments and thy ebony cross affright me!
 Stand back! I have a crucifix myself,—
 I have a crucifix! Methinks 'twere fitting
 The deed—the vow—the symbol of the deed—
 And the deed's register should tally, father!

(draws a cross-handled dagger and raises it on high.)

Behold the cross wherewith a vow like mine
 Is written in Heaven!

Monk. Thy words are madness, daughter,

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

And speak a purpose unholy—thy lips are livid—
Thine eyes are wild—tempt not the wrath divine!
Pause ere too late!—oh, be not—be not rash!
Swear not the oath—oh, swear it not!

Lal. 'Tis sworn!

III

An Apartment in a Palace. POLITIAN and BALDAZZAR.

Baldazzar. Arouse thee now, Politian!
Thou must not—nay indeed, indeed, thou shalt not
Give way unto these humours. Be thyself!
Shake off the idle fancies that beset thee,
And live, for now thou diest!

Politian. Not so, Baldazzar!
Surely I live.

Bal. Politian, it doth grieve me
To see thee thus!

Pol. Baldazzar, it doth grieve me
To give thee cause for grief, my honoured friend.
Command me, sir! what wouldst thou have me do?
At thy behest I will shake off that nature
Which from my forefathers I did inherit,
Which with my mother's milk I did imbibe,
And be no more Politian, but some other.
Command me, sir!

Bal. To the field then—to the field—
To the senate or the field.

Pol. Alas! alas!
There is an imp would follow me even there!
There is an imp *hath* followed me even there!
There is——what voice was that?

Bal. I heard it not.
I heard not any voice except thine own,
And the echo of thine own.

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Pol. Then I but dreamed.

Bal. Give not thy soul to dreams: the camp—the
court

Befit thee—Fame awaits thee—Glory calls—
And her the trumpet-tongued thou wilt not hear
In hearkening to imaginary sounds
And phantom voices.

Pol. It is a phantom voice!
Didst thou not hear it *then*?

Bal. I heard it not.

Pol. Thou heardst it not!—Baldazzar, speak no
more

To me, Politian, of thy camps and courts.
Oh! I am sick, sick, sick, even unto death,
Of the hollow and high-sounding vanities
Of the populous Earth! Bear with me yet awhile!
We have been boys together—school-fellows—
And now are friends—yet shall not be so long—
For in the Eternal City thou shalt do me
A kind and gentle office, and a Power—
A Power august, benignant, and supreme—
Shall then absolve thee of all further duties
Unto thy friend.

Bal. Thou speakest a fearful riddle
I *will* not understand.

Pol. Yet now as Fate
Approaches, and the Hours are breathing low,
The sands of Time are changed to golden grains,
And dazzle me, Baldazzar. Alas! alas!
I *cannot* die, having within my heart
So keen a relish for the beautiful
As hath been kindled within it. Methinks the air
Is balmier now than it was wont to be—
Rich melodies are floating in the winds—
A rarer loveliness bedecks the earth—
And with a holier lustre the quiet moon
Sitteth in Heaven.—Hist! hist! thou canst not say

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Thou hearest not *now*, Baldazzar?

Bal. Indeed I hear not.

Pol. Not hear it!—listen now—listen!—the faintest sound

And yet the sweetest that ear ever heard!
A lady's voice!—and sorrow in the tone!
Baldazzar, it oppresses me like a spell!
Again!—again!—how solemnly it falls
Into my heart of hearts! that eloquent voice
Surely I never heard—yet it were well
Had I but heard it with its thrilling tones
In earlier days!

Bal. I myself hear it now.

Be still!—the voice, if I mistake not greatly,
Proceeds from yonder lattice—which you may see
Very plainly through the window—it belongs,
Does it not? unto this palace of the Duke.
The singer is undoubtedly beneath
The roof of his Excellency—and perhaps
Is even that Alessandra of whom he spoke
As the betrothed of Castiglione,
His son and heir.

Pol. Be still!—it comes again!

Voice (very faintly). "And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus,
That have loved thee so long,
In wealth and woe among?
And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus?"

Say nay! say nay!"

Bal. The song is English, and I oft have heard it
In merry England—never so plaintively—
Hist! hist! it comes again!

Voice (more loudly). "Is it so strong
As for to leave me thus,
That have loved thee so long,
In wealth and woe among?"

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus?

Say nay! say nay!"

Bal. 'Tis hushed and all is still!

Pol. All is not still.

Bal. Let us go down.

Pol. Go down, Baldazzar, go!

Bal. The hour is growing late—the Duke awaits
us,—

Thy presence is expected in the hall
Below. What ails thee, Earl Politian?

Voice (distinctly). "Who have loved thee so long,
In wealth and woe among,
And is thy heart so strong?

Say nay! say nay!"

Bal. Let us descend!—'tis time. Politian, give
These fancies to the wind. Remember, pray,
Your bearing lately savoured much of rudeness
Unto the Duke. Arouse thee! and remember!

Pol. Remember? I do. Lead on! I do remember
(*going.*)

Let us descend. Believe me I would give,
Freely would give the broad lands of my earldom
To look upon the face hidden by yon lattice—
"To gaze upon that veiled face, and hear
Once more that silent tongue."

Bal. Let me beg you, sir,
Descend with me—the Duke may be offended.
Let us go down, I pray you.

Voice (loudly). "Say nay!—say nay!"

Pol. (aside). 'Tis strange!—'tis very strange—me-
thought the voice
Chimed in with my desires and bade me stay!
(*approaching the window.*)

Sweet voice! I heed thee, and will surely stay.
Now be this Fancy, by Heaven, or be it Fate,
Still will I not descend. Baldazzar, make

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Apology unto the Duke for me ;
I go not down to-night.

Bal. Your lordship's pleasure
Shall be attended to. Good-night, Politian.

Pol. Good-night, my friend, good-night.

IV

The Gardens of a Palace—Moonlight. LALAGE and POLITIAN.

Lalage. And dost thou speak of love
To *me*, Politian?—dost thou speak of love
To Lalage?—ah woe—ah woe is me!
This mockery is most cruel—most cruel indeed!

Politian. Weep not! oh, sob not thus!—thy bitter
tears

Will madden me. Oh, mourn not, Lalage—
Be comforted! I know—I know it all,
And *still* I speak of love. Look at me, brightest,
And beautiful Lalage!—turn here thine eyes!
Thou askest me if I could speak of love,
Knowing what I know, and seeing what I have seen.
Thou askest me that—and thus I answer thee—
Thus on my bended knee I answer thee. (*kneeling.*)
Sweet Lalage, *I love thee—love thee—love thee;*
Thro' good and ill—thro' weal and woe, *I love thee.*
Not mother, with her first-born on her knee,
Thrills with intenser love than I for thee.
Not on God's altar, in any time or clime,
Burned there a holier fire than burneth now
Within my spirit for *thee*. And do I love? (*arising.*)
Even for thy woes I love thee—even for thy woes—
Thy beauty and thy woes.

Lal. Alas, proud Earl,
Thou dost forget thyself, remembering me!
How, in thy father's halls, among the maidens
Pure and reproachless of thy princely line,

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Could the dishonoured Lalage abide?
 Thy wife, and with a tainted memory?—
 My seared and blighted name, how would it tally
 With the ancestral honours of thy house,
 And with thy glory?

Pol. Speak not to me of glory!
 I hate—I loathe the name; I do abhor
 The unsatisfactory and ideal thing.
 Art thou not Lalage, and I Politian?
 Do I not love—art thou not beautiful—
 What need we more? Ha! glory! now speak not
 of it:

By all I hold most sacred and most solemn—
 By all my wishes now—my fears hereafter—
 By all I scorn on earth and hope in heaven—
 There is no deed I would more glory in,
 Than in thy cause to scoff at this same glory
 And trample it under foot. What matters it—
 What matters it, my fairest, and my best,
 That we go down unhonoured and forgotten
 Into the dust—so we descend together?
 Descend together—and then—and then perchance—

Lal. Why dost thou pause, Politian?

Pol. And then perchance
Arise together, Lalage, and roam
 The starry and quiet dwellings of the blest,
 And still—

Lal. Why dost thou pause, Politian?

Pol. And still *together—together!*

Lal. Now, Earl of Leicester!
 Thou *lovest* me, and in my heart of hearts
 I feel thou lovest me truly.

Pol.

O Lalage!

(throwing himself upon his knee.)

And lovest thou *me?*

Lal.

Hist! hush! within the gloom
 Of yonder trees methought a figure passed—

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

A spectral figure, solemn, and slow, and noiseless—
Like the grim shadow Conscience, solemn and noise-
less. (*walks across and returns.*)

I was mistaken—'twas but a giant bough
Stirred by the autumn wind. Politian!

Pol. My Lalage—my love! why art thou moved?
Why dost thou turn so pale? Not Conscience' self,
Far less a shadow which thou likenest to it,
Should shake the firm spirit thus. But the night wind
Is chilly—and these melancholy boughs
Throw over all things a gloom.

Lal. Politian!

Thou speakest to me of love. Knowest thou the land
With which all tongues are busy—a land new found—
Miraculously found by one of Genoa—
A thousand leagues within the golden west?
A fairy land of flowers, and fruit, and sunshine,—
And crystal lakes, and over-arching forests,
And mountains, around whose towering summits the
winds

Of Heaven untrammelled flow—which air to breathe
Is Happiness now, and will be Freedom hereafter
In days that are to come?

Pol. Oh, wilt thou—wilt thou
Fly to that Paradise—my Lalage, wilt thou
Fly thither with me? There Care shall be forgotten,
And Sorrow shall be no more, and Eros be all.
And life shall then be mine, for I will live
For thee, and in thine eyes—and thou shalt be
No more a mourner—but the radiant Joys
Shall wait upon thee, and the angel Hope
Attend thee ever; and I will kneel to thee
And worship thee, and call thee my beloved,
My own, my beautiful, my love, my wife,
My all;—oh, wilt thou—wilt thou, Lalage,
Fly thither with me?

Lal. A deed is to be done—

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Castiglione lives!

Pol. And he shall die! (*Exit.*)

Lal. (*after a pause*). And—he—shall—die!—alas!
 Castiglione die? Who spoke the words?
 Where am I?—what was it he said?—Politian!
 Thou *art* not gone—thou art not *gone*, Politian!
 I *feel* thou art not gone—yet dare not look,
 Lest I behold thee not—thou *couldst* not go
 With those words upon thy lips—oh, speak to me!
 And let me hear thy voice—one word—one word,
 To say thou art not gone,—one little sentence,
 To say how thou dost scorn—how thou dost hate
 My womanly weakness. Ha! ha! thou *art* not gone—
 Oh, speak to me! I *knew* thou wouldst not go!
 I knew thou wouldst not, couldst not, *durst* not go.
 Villain, thou *art* not gone—thou mockest me!
 And thus I clutch thee—thus!—He is gone, he is
 gone—
 Gone—gone. Where am I?—'tis well—'tis very
 well!
 So that the blade be keen—the blow be sure,
 'Tis well, 'tis *very* well—alas! alas!

V

The Suburbs. POLITIAN alone.

Politian. This weakness grows upon me. I am
 faint,
 And much I fear me, ill—it will not do
 To die ere I have lived!—Stay—stay thy hand,
 O Azrael, yet awhile!—Prince of the Powers
 Of Darkness and the Tomb, oh, pity me!
 Oh, pity me! let me not perish now,
 In the budding of my Paradisal Hope!
 Give me to live yet—yet a little while:

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

'Tis I who pray for life—I who so late
Demanded but to die!—What sayeth the Count?

Enter Baldazzar.

Baldazzar. That, knowing no cause of quarrel or of
feud
Between the Earl Politian and himself,
He doth decline your cartel.

Pol. *What* didst thou say?
What answer was it you brought me, good Baldazzar?
With what excessive fragrance the zephyr comes
Laden from yonder bowers!—a fairer day,
Or one more worthy Italy, methinks
No mortal eyes have seen!—*what* said the Count?

Bal. That he, Castiglione, not being aware
Of any feud existing, or any cause
Of quarrel between your lordship and himself,
Cannot accept the challenge.

Pol. *It is most true—*
All this is very true. When saw you, sir,
When saw you now, Baldazzar, in the frigid
Ungenia Britain which we left so lately,
A heaven so calm as this—so utterly free
From the evil taint of clouds?—and he did say?

Bal. No more, my lord, than I have told you:
The Count Castiglione will not fight,
Having no cause for quarrel.

Pol. *Now this is true—*
All very true. Thou art my friend, Baldazzar,
And I have not forgotten it—thou'lt do me
A piece of service; wilt thou go back and say
Unto this man, that I, the Earl of Leicester,
Hold him a villain?—thus much, I pr'ythee, say
Unto the Count—it is exceeding just
He should have cause for quarrel.

Bal. *My lord!—my friend!—*

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Pol. (aside). 'Tis he—he comes himself! (*aloud.*)
Thou reasonest well.

I know what thou wouldst say—not send the message—
Well!—I will think of it—I will not send it.
Now pr'ythee, leave me—hither doth come a person
With whom affairs of a most private nature
I would adjust.

Bal. I go—to-morrow we meet,
Do we not?—at the Vatican.

Pol. At the Vatican.
(*Exit Baldazzar.*)

Enter Castiglione.

Cas. The Earl of Leicester here!

Pol. I *am* the Earl of Leicester, and thou seest,
Dost thou not? that I am here.

Cas. My lord, some strange,
Some singular mistake—misunderstanding—
Hath without doubt arisen: thou hast been urged
Thereby, in heat of anger, to address
Some words most unaccountable, in writing,
To me, Castiglione; the bearer being
Baldazzar, Duke of Surrey. I am aware
Of nothing which might warrant thee in this thing,
Having given thee no offence. Ha!—am I right?
'Twas a mistake?—undoubtedly—we all
Do err at times.

Pol. Draw, villain, and prate no more!

Cas. Ha!—draw?—and villain? have at thee then
at once,
Proud Earl! (*draws.*)

Pol. (drawing). Thus to the expiatory tomb,
Untimely sepulchre, I do devote thee
In the name of Lalage!

*Cas. (letting fall his sword and recoiling to the
extremity of the stage.)*

Of Lalage!

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

Hold off—thy sacred hand!—avaunt, I say!
Avaunt—I will not fight thee—indeed I dare not.

Pol. Thou wilt not fight with me didst say, Sir
Count?

Shall I be baffled thus?—now this is well;
Didst say thou *darest* not? Ha!

Cas. I dare not—dare not—
Hold off thy hand—with that beloved name
So fresh upon thy lips I will not fight thee—
I cannot—dare not—

Pol. Now, by my halidom,
I do believe thee!—coward, I do believe thee!

Cas. Ha!—coward!—this may not be!

*(clutches his sword and staggers towards
Politian, but his purpose is changed before
reaching him, and he falls upon his knee at
the feet of the Earl.)*

Alas! my lord,

It is—it is—most true. In such a cause
I am the veriest coward. Oh, pity me!

Pol. (*greatly softened*). Alas!—I do—indeed I pity
thee.

Cas. And Lalage—

Pol. Scoundrel!—arise and die!

Cas. It needeth not be—thus—thus—Oh, let me die
Thus on my bended knee. It were most fitting
That in this deep humiliation I perish.
For in the fight I will not raise a hand
Against thee, Earl of Leicester. Strike thou home—
(baring his bosom.)

Here is no let or hindrance to thy weapon—
Strike home. I will not fight thee.

Pol. Now's Death and Hell!

Am I not—am I not sorely—grievously tempted
To take thee at thy word? But mark me, sir:
Think not to fly me thus. Do thou prepare
For public insult in the streets—before

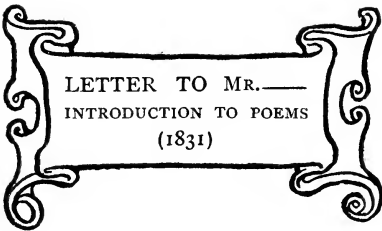
SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

The eyes of the citizens. I'll follow thee—
Like an avenging spirit I'll follow thee
Even unto death. Before those whom thou lovest—
Before all Rome I'll taunt thee, villain,—I'll taunt
thee,

Dost hear? with cowardice—thou wilt not fight me?
Thou liest! thou shalt! *(Exit.)*

Cas. Now this indeed is just!
Most righteous, and most just, avenging Heaven!



A decorative border consisting of a central rectangular frame with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork extending from the corners and sides.

LETTER TO MR.—
INTRODUCTION TO POEMS
(1831)



WEST POINT, 1831.

DEAR B—

Believing only a portion of my former volume to be worthy a second edition—that small portion I thought it as well to include in the present book as to re-publish by itself. I have therefore herein combined "Al Aaraaf" and "Tamerlane" with other poems hitherto unprinted. Nor have I hesitated to insert from the "Minor Poems," now omitted, whole lines, and even passages, to the end that being placed in a fairer light, and the trash shaken from them in which they were embedded, they may have some chance of being seen by posterity.

It has been said that a good critique on a poem may be written by one who is no poet himself. This, according to *your* idea and *mine* of poetry, I feel to be false—the less poetical the critic, the less just the critique, and the converse. On this account, and because there are but few B—s in the world, I would be as much ashamed of the world's good opinion as proud of your own. Another than yourself might here observe, "Shakespeare is in possession of the world's good opinion, and yet Shakespeare is the greatest of poets. It appears then that the world judge correctly; why should you be ashamed of their favourable judgment?" The difficulty lies in the interpretation of the word "judgment" or "opinion." The opinion is the world's, truly, but it may be called theirs as a man would call a book his, having bought it; he did not write the book, but it is his; they did not originate the opinion, but it is theirs. A fool, for

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example, thinks Shakespeare a great poet—yet the fool has never read Shakespeare. But the fool's neighbour, who is a step higher on the Andes of the mind, whose head (that is to say, his more exalted thought) is too far above the fool to be seen or understood, but whose feet (by which I mean his every-day actions) are sufficiently near to be discerned, and by means of which that superiority is ascertained, which *but* for them would never have been discovered—this neighbour asserts that Shakespeare is a great poet—the fool believes him, and it is henceforward his *opinion*. This neighbour's own opinion has, in like manner, been adopted from one above *him*, and so, ascendingly, to a few gifted individuals who kneel around the summit, beholding, face to face, the master spirit who stands upon the pinnacle.

You are aware of the great barrier in the path of an American writer. He is read, if at all, in preference to the combined and established wit of the world. I say established; for it is with literature as with law or empire—an established name is an estate in tenure, or a throne in possession. Besides, one might suppose that books, like their authors, improve by travel—their having crossed the sea is, with us, so great a distinction. Our antiquaries abandon time for distance; our very fops glance from the binding to the bottom of the title-page, where the mystic characters which spell London, Paris, or Genoa, are precisely so many letters of recommendation.

I mentioned just now a vulgar error as regards criticism. I think the notion that no poet can form a correct estimate of his own writings is another. I remarked before that in proportion to the poetical talent would be the justice of a critique upon poetry. Therefore a bad poet would, I grant, make a false critique, and his self-love would infallibly bias his little judgment in his favour; but a poet, who is

LETTER TO MR. —

indeed a poet, could not, I think, fail of making a just critique. Whatever should be deducted on the score of self-love might be replaced on account of his intimate acquaintance with the subject ; in short, we have more instances of false criticism than of just where one's own writings are the test, simply because we have more bad poets than good. There are, of course, many objections to what I say : Milton is a great example of the contrary ; but his opinion with respect to the "Paradise Regained" is by no means fairly ascertained. By what trivial circumstances men are often led to assert what they do not really believe ! Perhaps an inadvertent word has descended to posterity. But, in fact, the "Paradise Regained" is little, if at all, inferior to the "Paradise Lost," and is only supposed so to be because men do not like epics, whatever they may say to the contrary, and reading those of Milton in their natural order, are too much wearied with the first to derive any pleasure from the second.

I dare say Milton preferred "Comus" to either—if so—justly.

As I am speaking of poetry, it will not be amiss to touch slightly upon the most singular heresy in its modern history—the heresy of what is called, very foolishly, the Lake School. Some years ago I might have been induced, by an occasion like the present, to attempt a formal refutation of their doctrine ; at present it would be a work of supererogation. The wise must bow to the wisdom of such men as Coleridge and Southey, but being wise, have laughed at poetical theories so prosaically exemplified.

Aristotle, with singular assurance, has declared poetry the most philosophical of all writings¹—but it required a Wordsworth to pronounce it the most metaphysical. He seems to think that the end of

¹ Σπουδιστατον και φιλοσοφικοτατον γενοσ.

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poetry is, or should be, instruction—yet it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness; if so, the end of every separate part of our existence—everything connected with our existence—should be still happiness. Therefore the end of instruction should be happiness; and happiness is another name for pleasure;—therefore the end of instruction should be pleasure: yet we see the above-mentioned opinion implies precisely the reverse.

To proceed: *ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-men than he who instructs, since utility is happiness, and pleasure is the end already obtained which instruction is merely the means of obtaining.

I see no reason, then, why our metaphysical poets should plume themselves so much on the utility of their works, unless indeed they refer to instruction with eternity in view; in which case, sincere respect for their piety would not allow me to express my contempt for their judgment; contempt which it would be difficult to conceal, since their writings are professedly to be understood by the few, and it is the many who stand in need of salvation. In such case I should no doubt be tempted to think of the devil in "Melmoth," who labours indefatigably, through three octavo volumes, to accomplish the destruction of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand.

Against the subtleties which would make poetry a study—not a passion—it becomes the metaphysician to reason—but the poet to protest. Yet Wordsworth and Coleridge are men in years; the one imbued in contemplation from his childhood, the other a giant in intellect and learning. The diffidence, then, with which I venture to dispute their authority, would be overwhelming did I not feel, from the bottom of my heart, that learning has little to do with the

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imagination—intellect with the passions—or age with poetry.

Trifles, like straws, upon the surface flow ;
He who would search for pearls must dive below,

are lines which have done much mischief. As regards the greater truths, men oftener err by seeking them at the bottom than at the top ; the depth lies in the huge abysses where wisdom is sought—not in the palpable palaces where she is found. The ancients were not always right in hiding the goddess in a well ; witness the light which Bacon has thrown upon philosophy ; witness the principles of our divine faith—that moral mechanism by which the simplicity of a child may overbalance the wisdom of a man. Poetry, above all things, is a beautiful painting whose tints to minute inspection are confusion worse confounded, but start boldly out to the cursory glance of the connoisseur.

We see an instance of Coleridge's liability to err, in his "Biographia Literaria"—professedly his literary life and opinions, but, in fact, a treatise *de omni scibili et quibusdam aliis*. He goes wrong by reason of his very profundity, and of his error we have a natural type in the contemplation of a star. He who regards it directly and intensely sees, it is true, the star, but it is the star without a ray—while he who surveys it less inquisitively is conscious of all for which the star is useful to us below—its brilliancy and its beauty.

As to Wordsworth, I have no faith in him. That he had in youth the feelings of a poet I believe—for there are glimpses of extreme delicacy in his writings—(and delicacy is the poet's own kingdom—his *El Dorado*)—but they have the appearance of a better day recollected ; and glimpses, at best, are little evidence of present poetic fire ; we know that a few straggling flowers spring up daily in the crevices of the glacier.

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He was to blame in wearing away his youth in contemplation with the end of poetizing in his manhood. With the increase of his judgment the light which should make it apparent has faded away. His judgment consequently is too correct. This may not be understood,—but the old Goths of Germany would have understood it, who used to debate matters of importance to their State twice, once when drunk, and once when sober—sober that they might not be deficient in formality—drunk lest they should be destitute of vigour.

The long wordy discussions by which he tries to reason us into admiration of his poetry, speak very little in his favour: they are full of such assertions as this (I have opened one of his volumes at random)—‘Of genius the only proof is the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before;’—indeed? then it follows that in doing what is *un*-worthy to be done, or what *has* been done before, no genius can be evinced; yet the picking of pockets is an unworthy act, pockets have been picked time immemorial, and Barrington, the pick-pocket, in point of genius, would have thought hard of a comparison with William Wordsworth, the poet.

Again, in estimating the merit of certain poems, whether they be Ossian’s or Macpherson’s can surely be of little consequence, yet, in order to prove their worthlessness, Mr. W. has expended many pages in the controversy. *Tantene animis?* Can great minds descend to such absurdity? But worse still: that he may bear down every argument in favour of these poems, he triumphantly drags forward a passage, in his abomination with which he expects the reader to sympathise. It is the beginning of the epic poem “*Temora*.” “The blue waves of Ullin roll in light; the green hills are covered with day; trees shake their dusty heads in the breeze.” And this—this gorgeous,

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yet simple imagery, where all is alive and panting with immortality—this, William Wordsworth, the author of “Peter Bell,” has *selected* for his contempt. We shall see what better he, in his own person, has to offer. Imprimis :

And now she's at the pony's head,
And now she's at the pony's tail,
On that side now, and now on this ;
And, almost stifled with her bliss—
A few sad tears does Betty shed,
She pats the pony, where or when
She knows not : happy Betty Foy !
Oh, Johnny, never mind the doctor !

Secondly :

The dew was falling fast, the—stars began to blink ;
I heard a voice : it said,—“ Drink, pretty creature, drink ! ”
And, looking o'er the hedge, be—fore me I espied
A snow-white mountain lamb, with a—maiden at its side.
No other sheep were near,—the lamb was all alone,
And by a slender cord was—tether'd to a stone.

Now, we have no doubt this is all true : we *will* believe it, indeed we will, Mr. W. Is it sympathy for the sheep you wished to excite ? I love a sheep from the bottom of my heart.

But there are occasions, dear B——, there are occasions when even Wordsworth is reasonable. Even Stamboul, it is said, shall have an end, and the most unlucky blunders must come to a conclusion. Here is an extract from his preface :

“ Those who have been accustomed to the phraseology of modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to a conclusion (*impossible !*) will, no doubt, have to struggle with feelings of awkwardness ; (ha ! ha ! ha !) they will look round for poetry (ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !), and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts have been permitted to assume that title.” Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

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Yet, let not Mr. W. despair ; he has given immortality to a waggon, and the bee Sophocles has transmitted to eternity a sore toe, and dignified a tragedy with a chorus of turkeys.

Of Coleridge, I cannot but speak with reverence. His towering intellect ! his gigantic power ! To use an author quoted by himself, "*J'ai trouvé souvent que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient ;*" and to employ his own language, he has imprisoned his own conceptions by the barrier he has erected against those of others. It is lamentable to think that such a mind should be buried in metaphysics, and, like the Nyctanthes, waste its perfume upon the night alone. In reading that man's poetry, I tremble like one who stands upon a volcano, conscious from the very darkness bursting from the crater, of the fire and the light that are weltering below.

What is Poetry?—Poetry ! that Proteus-like idea, with as many appellations as the nine-titled Corcyra ! "Give me," I demanded of a scholar some time ago, "give me a definition of poetry." "*Très-volontiers ;*" and he proceeded to his library, brought me a Dr. Johnson, and overwhelmed me with a definition. Shade of the immortal Shakespeare ! I imagine to myself the scowl of your spiritual eye upon the profanity of that scurrilous Ursa Major. Think of poetry, dear B——, think of poetry, and then think of Dr. Samuel Johnson ! Think of all that is airy and fairy-like, and then of all that is hideous and unwieldy ; think of his huge bulk, the Elephant ! and then—and then think of the "Tempest"—the "Midsummer Night's Dream"—Prospero—Oberon—and Titania !

A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth ; to romance, by having, for its object, an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only

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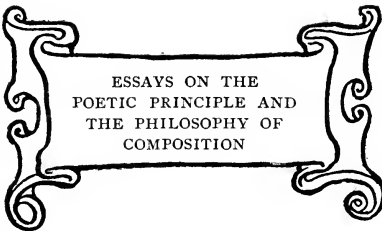
so far as this object is attained ; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *indefinite* sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry ; music, without the idea, is simply music ; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness.

What was meant by the invective against him who had no music in his soul ?

To sum up this long rigmarole, I have, dear B——, what you, no doubt, perceive, for the metaphysical poets, *as* poets, the most sovereign contempt. That they have followers proves nothing—

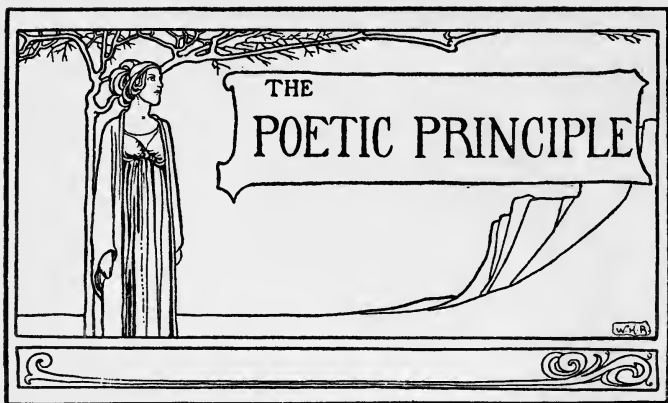
No Indian prince has to his palace
More followers than a thief to the gallows.





ESSAYS ON THE
POETIC PRINCIPLE AND
THE PHILOSOPHY OF
COMPOSITION





IN speaking of the Poetic Principle, I have no design to be either thorough or profound. While discussing very much at random the essentiality of what we call Poetry, my principal purpose will be to cite for consideration some few of those minor English or American poems which best suit my own taste, or which, upon my own fancy, have left the most definite impression. By "minor poems" I mean, of course, poems of little length. And here, in the beginning, permit me to say a few words in regard to a somewhat peculiar principle, which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, has always had its influence in my own critical estimate of the poem. I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, "a long poem," is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the

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very utmost, it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect, and in fact, no longer such.

There are, no doubt, many who have found difficulty in reconciling the critical dictum that the "Paradise Lost" is to be devoutly admired throughout, with the absolute impossibility of maintaining for it, during perusal, the amount of enthusiasm which that critical dictum would demand. This great work, in fact, is to be regarded as poetical only when, losing sight of that vital requisite in all works of Art, Unity, we view it merely as a series of minor poems. If, to preserve its Unity—its totality of effect or impression—we read it (as would be necessary) at a single sitting, the result is but a constant alternation of excitement and depression. After a passage of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitude which no critical pre-judgment can force us to admire; but if, upon completing the work, we read it again; omitting the first book—that is to say, commencing with the second—we shall be surprised at now finding that admirable which we before condemned—that damnable which we had previously so much admired. It follows from all this that the ultimate, aggregate, or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun, is a nullity—and this is precisely the fact.

In regard to the Iliad, we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason, for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but, granting the epic intention, I can say only that the work is based in an imperfect sense of Art. The modern epic is, of the supposititious ancient model, but an inconsiderate and blind-fold imitation. But the day of these artistic anomalies is over. If, at any time, any very long poem *were* popular in reality—which I doubt—it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.

That the extent of a poetical work is, *ceteris paribus*,

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the measure of its merit, seems undoubtedly, when we thus state it, a proposition sufficiently absurd—yet we are indebted for it to the Quarterly Reviews. Surely there can be nothing in mere *size*, abstractly considered—there can be nothing in mere *bulk*, so far as a volume is concerned, which has so continuously elicited admiration from these saturnine pamphlets! A mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, *does* impress us with a sense of the sublime—but no man is impressed after *this* fashion by the material grandeur of even “The Columbiad.” Even the Quarterlies have not instructed us to be so impressed by it. *As yet*, they have not *insisted* on our estimating Lamartine by the cubic foot, or Pollock by the pound—but what else are we to *infer* from their continual prating about “sustained effort”? If, by “sustained effort,” any little gentleman has accomplished an epic, let us frankly commend him for the effort—if this indeed be a thing commendable—but let us forbear praising the epic on the effort’s account. It is to be hoped that common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of Art rather by the impression it makes—by the effect it produces—than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of “sustained effort” which had been found necessary in effecting the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another—nor can all the Quarterlies in Christendom confound them. By and by, this proposition, with many which I have been just urging, will be received as self-evident. In the meantime, by being generally condemned as falsities, they will not be essentially damaged as truths.

On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A *very* short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never pro-

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duces a profound or enduring effect. There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax. De Béranger has wrought innumerable things, pungent and spirit-stirring ; but in general they have been too imponderous to stamp themselves deeply into the public attention, and thus, as so many feathers of fancy, have been blown aloft only to be whistled down the wind.

A remarkable instance of the effect of undue brevity in depressing a poem—in keeping it out of the popular view—is afforded by the following exquisite little Serenade :

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright.
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?—
To thy chamber-window, sweet !

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine,
O, beloved as thou art !

O, lift me from the grass !
I die, I faint, I fail !
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas !
My heart beats loud and fast :
O ! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last !

Very few perhaps are familiar with these lines—yet no less a poet than Shelley is their author. Their warm, yet delicate and ethereal imagination will be

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appreciated by all, but by none so thoroughly as by him who has himself arisen from sweet dreams of one beloved, to bathe in the aromatic air of a southern midsummer night.

One of the finest poems by Willis—the very best in my opinion which he has ever written—has, no doubt, through this same defect of undue brevity, been kept back from its proper position, not less in the critical than in the popular view :

The shadows lay along Broadway,
’Twas near the twilight-tide—
And slowly there a lady fair
Was walking in her pride.
Alone walked she ; but, viewlessly,
Walked spirits at her side.

Peace charmed the street beneath her feet,
And Honour charmed the air ;
And all astir looked kind on her,
And called her good as fair—
For all God ever gave to her
She kept with chary care.

She kept with care her beauties rare
From lovers warm and true—
For her heart was cold to all but gold,
And the rich came not to woo—
But honoured well her charms to sell,
If priests the selling do.

Now walking there was one more fair—
A slight girl, lily-pale ;
And she had unseen company
To make the spirit quail—
’Twixt Want and Scorn she walked forlorn,
And nothing could avail.

No mercy now can clear her brow
From this world’s peace to pray,
For, as love’s wild prayer dissolved in air,
Her woman’s heart gave way !—
But the sin forgiven by Christ in Heaven,
By man is cursed away !

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In this composition we find it difficult to recognise the Willis who has written so many mere "verses of society." The lines are not only richly ideal, but full of energy, while they breathe an earnestness — an evident sincerity of sentiment, for which we look in vain throughout all the other works of this author.

While the epic mania—while the idea that to merit in poetry prolixity is indispensable—has for some years past been gradually dying out of the public mind, by mere dint of its own absurdity—we find it succeeded by a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our Poetical Literature than all its other enemies combined. I allude to the heresy of *The Didactic*. It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral, and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronized this happy idea, and we Bostonians, very especially, have developed it in full. We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true Poetic dignity and force:—but the simple fact is that would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified—more supremely noble, than this very poem—this poem *per se*—this poem which is a poem and nothing more—this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

With as deep a reverence for the True as ever inspired the bosom of man, I would nevertheless limit, in some measure, its modes of inculcation. I would limit to enforce them. I would not enfeeble them by dissipa-

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tion. The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All *that* which is so indispensable in Song is precisely all *that* with which *she* has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox to wreath her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. *He* must be blind indeed who does not perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemption who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. I place Taste in the middle because it is just this position which, in the mind, it occupies. It holds intimate relations with either extreme ; but from the Moral Sense is separated by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to place some of its operations among the virtues themselves. Nevertheless we find the *offices* of the trio marked with a sufficient distinction. Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful, while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Of this latter, while Conscience teaches the obligation, and Reason the expediency, Taste contents herself with displaying the charms;—waging war upon Vice solely on the ground of her deformity—her disproportion—her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious—in a word, to Beauty.

An immortal instinct deep within the spirit of man is thus, plainly, a sense of the Beautiful. This it is

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which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odours, and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colours, and odours, and sentiments a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odours, and colours, and sentiments which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle by multi-form combinations among the things and thoughts of Time to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements perhaps appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry—or when by Music, the most entrancing of the poetic moods—we find ourselves melted into tears, we weep then, not as the Abbate Gravina supposes, through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness—this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted—has given to the world all *that* which it (the

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world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and *to feel* as poetic.

The Poetic Sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes—in Painting, in Sculpture, in Architecture, in the Dance—very especially in Music—and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the composition of the Landscape Garden. Our present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music perhaps that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained in *fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot* have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess—and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate then :—I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. *That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating,

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and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement of *the soul*, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore—using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes:—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least *most readily* attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion, or the Precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work: but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that *Beauty* which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem.

I cannot better introduce the few poems which I shall present for your consideration, than by the citation of the Proem to Longellow's "Waif":

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an Eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me,
That my soul cannot resist;

A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

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Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavour ;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start ;

Who through long days of labour,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

With no great range of imagination, these lines have been justly admired for their delicacy of expression. Some of the images are very effective. Nothing can be better than—

————— the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Down the corridors of Time.

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The idea of the last quatrain is also very effective. The poem on the whole, however, is chiefly to be admired for the graceful *insouciance* of its metre, so well in accordance with the character of the sentiments, and especially for the *ease* of the general manner. This "ease" or naturalness, in a literary style, it has long been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone—as a point of really difficult attainment. But not so: a natural manner is difficult only to him who should never meddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that *the tone*, in composition, should always be that which the mass of mankind would adopt—and must perpetually vary, of course, with the occasion. The author who, after the fashion of *The North American Review*, should be upon *all* occasions merely "quiet," must necessarily upon *many* occasions be simply silly, or stupid; and has no more right to be considered "easy" or "natural" than a Cockney exquisite, or than the sleeping Beauty in the wax-works.

Among the minor poems of Bryant, none has so much impressed me as the one which he entitles "June." I quote only a portion of it:

There, through the long, long summer hours,
The golden light should lie,
And thick young herbs and groups of flowers
Stand in their beauty by.
The oriole should build and tell
His love-tale, close beside my cell;
The idle butterfly
Should rest him there, and there be heard
The housewife-bee and humming bird.

And what if cheerful shouts, at noon,
Come, from the village sent,
Or songs of maids, beneath the moon,
With fairy laughter blent?

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And what if, in the evening light,
Betrothed lovers walk in sight
Of my low monument?
I would the lovely scene around
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.

I know, I know I should not see
The season's glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me,
Nor its wild music flow ;
But if, around my place of sleep,
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go.
Soft airs and song, and light and bloom,
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

These to their softened hearts should bear
The thought of what has been,
And speak of one who cannot share
The gladness of the scene ;
Whose part in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is—that his grave is green!
And deeply would their hearts rejoice
To hear again his living voice.

The rhythmical flow here is even voluptuous—nothing could be more melodious. The poem has always affected me in a remarkable manner. The intense melancholy which seems to well up, perforce, to the surface of all the poet's cheerful sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul—while there is the truest poetic elevation in the thrill. The impression left is one of a pleasurable sadness. And if, in the remaining compositions which I shall introduce to you, there be more or less of a similar tone always apparent, let me remind you that (how or why we know not) this certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true Beauty. It is, nevertheless,

A feeling of sadness and longing
That is not akin to pain,

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And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

The taint of which I speak is clearly perceptible even in a poem so full of brilliancy and spirit as "The Health" of Edward Coote Pinkney :

I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon ;
To whom the better elements
And kindly stars have given
A form so fair, that like the air,
'Tis less of earth than heaven.

Her every tone is music's own,
Like those of morning birds,
And something more than melody
Dwells ever in her words ;
The coinage of her heart are they,
And from her lips each flows
As one may see the burdened bee
Forth issue from the rose.

Affections are as thoughts to her,
The measures of her hours ;
Her feelings have the fragrancy,
The freshness of young flowers ;
And lovely passions, changing oft,
So fill her, she appears
The image of themselves by turns,—
The idol of past years !

Of her bright face one glance will trace
A picture on the brain,
And of her voice in echoing hearts
A sound must long remain ;
But memory, such as mine of her,
So very much endears,
When death is nigh my latest sigh
Will not be life's, but hers.

I filled this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon—

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Her health! and would on earth there stood,
Some more of such a frame,
That life might be all poetry,
And weariness a name.

It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinkney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been ranked as the first of American lyrists by that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American Letters, in conducting the thing called *The North American Review*. The poem just cited is especially beautiful; but the poetic elevation which it induces we must refer chiefly to our sympathy in the poet's enthusiasm. We pardon his hyperboles for the evident earnestness with which they are uttered.

It was by no means my design, however, to expatiate upon the *merits* of what I should read you. These will necessarily speak for themselves. Boccacini, in his "Advertisements from Parnassus," tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo a very caustic criticism upon a very admirable book:—whereupon the god asked him for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only busied himself about the errors. On hearing this, Apollo, handing him a sack of unwinnowed wheat, bade him pick out *all the chaff* for his reward.

Now this fable answers very well as a hit at the critics—but I am by no means sure that the god was in the right. I am by no means certain that the true limits of the critical duty are not grossly misunderstood. Excellence, in a poem especially, may be considered in the light of an axiom, which need only be properly *put*, to become self-evident. It is *not* excellence if it require to be demonstrated as such:—and thus to point out too particularly the merits of a work of Art, is to admit that they are *not* merits altogether.

Among the "Melodies" of Thomas Moore is one

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whose distinguished character as a poem proper seems to have been singularly left out of view. I allude to his lines beginning—"Come, rest in this bosom." The intense energy of their expression is not surpassed by anything in Byron. There are two of the lines in which a sentiment is conveyed that embodies the *all in all* of the divine passion of Love—a sentiment which, perhaps, has found its echo in more, and in more passionate, human hearts than any other single sentiment ever embodied in words :

Come, rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still here ;
Here still is the smile, that no cloud can o'ercast,
And a heart and a hand all thy own to the last.

Oh! what was love made for, if 'tis not the same
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame ?
I know not, I ask not, if guilt 's in that heart,
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art.

Thou hast called me thy Angel in moments of bliss,
And thy Angel I'll be, 'mid the horrors of this,—
Through the furnace, unshrinking, thy steps to pursue,
And shield thee, and save thee,—or perish there too!

It has been the fashion of late days to deny Moore Imagination, while granting him Fancy—a distinction originating with Coleridge—than whom no man more fully comprehended the great powers of Moore. The fact is, that the fancy of this poet so far predominates over all his other faculties, and over the fancy of all other men, as to have induced, very naturally, the idea that he is fanciful *only*. But never was there a greater mistake. Never was a grosser wrong done the fame of a true poet. In the compass of the English language I can call to mind no poem more profoundly—more weirdly *imaginative*, in the best sense, than the lines commencing—"I would I were by that dim lake"—which are the composition of

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Thomas Moore. I regret that I am unable to remember them.

One of the noblest—and, speaking of Fancy—one of the most singularly fanciful of modern poets, was Thomas Hood. His "Fair Ines" had always for me an inexpressible charm :

O saw ye not fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down
And rob the world of rest;
She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

O turn again, fair Ines,
Before the fall of night,
For fear the moon should shine alone,
And stars unrivalled bright;
And blessed will the lover be
That walks beneath their light,
And breathes the love against thy cheek
I dare not even write!

Would I had been, fair Ines,
That gallant cavalier,
Who rode so gaily by thy side,
And whispered thee so near!
Were there no bonny dames at home,
Or no true lovers here,
That he should cross the seas to win
The dearest of the dear?

I saw thee, lovely Ines,
Descend along the shore,
With bands of noble gentlemen,
And banners waved before;
And gentle youth and maidens gay,
And snowy plumes they wore;
It would have been a beauteous dream,
If it had been no more!

Alas, alas, fair Ines,
She went away with song,

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With Music waiting on her steps,
And shoutings of the throng ;
But some were sad and felt no mirth,
But only Music's wrong,
In sounds that sang Farewell, Farewell,
To her you've loved so long.

Farewell, farewell, fair Ines,
That vessel never bore
So fair a lady on its deck,
Nor danced so light before,—
Alas for pleasure on the sea,
And sorrow on the shore!
The smile that blest one lover's heart
Has broken many more!

“The Haunted House,” by the same author, is one of the truest poems ever written,—one of the *truest*, one of the most unexceptionable, one of the most thoroughly artistic, both in its theme and in its execution. It is, moreover, powerfully ideal—imaginative. I regret that its length renders it unsuitable for the purposes of this lecture. In place of it permit me to offer the universally appreciated “Bridge of Sighs” :

One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care ;—
Fashioned so tenderly,
Young and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements ;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing ;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.

Touch her not scornfully ;
Think of her mournfully,

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Gently and humanly ;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful ;
Past all dishonour,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver ;
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river :
Mad from life's history, -
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd—
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world !

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran,—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it,—think of it,
Dissolute Man !
Lave in it, drink of it
Then, if you can !

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammy ;
Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses ;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home ?

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Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!
Oh! it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly,
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Take her up tenderly;
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!
Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently,—kindly,—
Smooth and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
Through muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fixed on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurred by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest,—
Cross her hands humbly,

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As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast!
Owning her weakness,
Her evil behaviour,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour!

The vigour of this poem is no less remarkable than its pathos. The versification, although carrying the fanciful to the very verge of the fantastic, is nevertheless admirably adapted to the wild insanity which is the thesis of the poem.

Among the minor poems of Lord Byron is one which has never received from the critics the praise which it undoubtedly deserves :

Though the day of my destiny's over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find ;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrunk not to share it with me,
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in *thee*.

Then when nature around me is smiling,
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling,
Because it reminds me of thine ;
And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If their billows excite an emotion,
It is that they bear me from *thee*.

Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To pain—it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me :
They may crush, but they shall not contemn—
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them.

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,

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Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake,—
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,
Nor mute, that the world might belie.

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one—
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'Twas folly not sooner to shun:
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *thee*.

From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that which I most cherished
Deserved to be dearest of all:
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of *thee*.

Although the rhythm here is one of the most difficult, the versification could scarcely be improved. No nobler *theme* ever engaged the pen of poet. It is the soul-elevating idea that no man can consider himself entitled to complain of Fate while in his adversity he still retains the unwavering love of woman.

From Alfred Tennyson—although in perfect sincerity I regard him as the noblest poet that ever lived—I have left myself time to cite only a very brief specimen. I call him, and *think* him the noblest of poets, *not* because the impressions he produces are at *all* times the most profound—*not* because the poetical excitement which he induces is at *all* times the most intense—but because it is at all times the most ethereal—in other words, the most elevating and most pure. No poet is so little of the earth, earthy.

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What I am about to read is from his last long poem,
"The Princess":

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

Thus, although in a very cursory and imperfect manner, I have endeavoured to convey to you my conception of the Poetic Principle. It has been my purpose to suggest that, while this Principle itself is, strictly and simply, the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty, the manifestation of the Principle is always found in *an elevating excitement of the soul*—quite independent of that passion which is the intoxication of the Heart, or of that truth which is the satisfaction of the Reason. For in regard to Passion, alas! its tendency is to degrade rather than to elevate the Soul. Love, on the contrary—Love—the true, the divine Eros—the Uranian as distinguished from the Dionæan Venus—is unquestionably the purest and truest of all poetical themes. And in

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regard to Truth, if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth we are led to perceive a harmony where none was apparent before, we experience at once the true poetical effect; but this effect is referable to the harmony alone, and not in the least degree to the truth which merely served to render the harmony manifest.

We shall reach, however, more immediately a distinct conception of what the true Poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the Poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognizes the ambrosia which nourishes his soul in the bright orbs that shine in Heaven, in the volutes of the flower, in the clustering of low shrubberies, in the waving of the grain-fields, in the slanting of tall eastern trees, in the blue distance of mountains, in the grouping of clouds, in the twinkling of half-hidden brooks, in the gleaming of silver rivers, in the repose of sequestered lakes, in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. He perceives it in the songs of birds, in the harp of Æolus, in the sighing of the night-wind, in the repining voice of the forest, in the surf that complains to the shore, in the fresh breath of the woods, in the scent of the violet, in the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth, in the suggestive odour that comes to him at eventide from far-distant undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored. He owns it in all noble thoughts, in all unworldly motives, in all holy impulses, in all chivalrous, generous, and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it in the beauty of woman, in the grace of her step, in the lustre of her eye, in the melody of her voice, in her soft laughter, in her sigh, in the harmony of the rustling of her robes. He deeply feels it in her winning endearments, in her burning enthusiasms, in her gentle charities, in her meek and devotional endurances, but above all—ah, far above all—he kneels to

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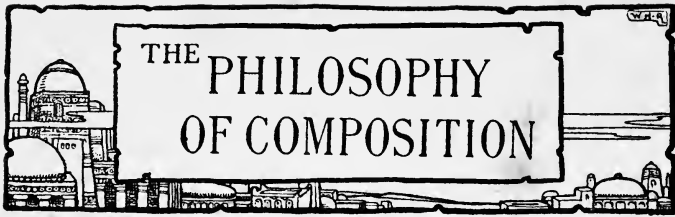
it, he worships it in the faith, in the purity, in the strength, in the altogether divine majesty of her *love*.

Let me conclude by the recitation of yet another brief poem, one very different in character from any that I have before quoted. It is by Motherwell, and is called "The Song of the Cavalier." With our modern and altogether rational ideas of the absurdity and impiety of warfare, we are not precisely in that frame of mind best adapted to sympathise with the sentiments, and thus to appreciate the real excellence of the poem. To do this fully we must identify ourselves in fancy with the soul of the old cavalier :

A steed ! a steed ! of matchless speede !
A sword of metal keene !
Al else to noble heartes is drosse—
Al else on earth is meane.
The neighynge of the war-horse prowde,
The rowleing of the drum,
The clangour of the trumpet lowde—
Be soundes from heaven that come.
And oh ! the thundering presse of knightes,
When as their war-cryes welle,
May tole from heaven an angel bright,
And rowse a fiend from hell.

Then mounte ! then mounte, brave gallants all
And don your helmes amaine :
Death's couriers, Fame and Honour, call
Us to the field againe.
No shrewish teares shall fill your eye
When the sword-hilt's in our hand,—
Heart-whole we'll part, and no whit sighe
For the fayrest of the land ;
Let piping swaine, and craven wight,
Thus weepe and puling crye,
Our business is like men to fight,
And hero-like to die !





THE PHILOSOPHY
OF COMPOSITION

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says—"By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens's idea—but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or autorial comment, whatever crevices of fact or action may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

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I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, “Of the innumerable effects or impressions of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?” Having chosen a novel first, and secondly, a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone—whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterwards looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event or tone as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say, who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but perhaps the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions, the tackle for scene-shifting, the step-ladders and demon-traps, the cock’s feathers, the red paint, and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine

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cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrion*.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven" as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*, the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris paribus*, no poet can afford

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to dispense with *anything* that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one-half of the “Paradise Lost” is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably*, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as “Robinson Crusoe” (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect—this, with one proviso—that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an im-

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pression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul*—*not* of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating “the beautiful.” Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to, is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable to a certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from anything here said that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, or even

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profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously

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novel effects, by the variation of *the application* of the *refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would of course be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*.

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. Having made up my mind to a *refrain*, the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the *refrain* forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "Nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being—I did not fail to perceive,

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in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non*-reasoning creature capable of speech ; and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer here also is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the *application* of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application*. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the

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first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the *expected* "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first established in mind the climax or concluding query—that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer—that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning, at the end where all works of art should begin; for it was here, at this point of my reconsiderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza :

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

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I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas, I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm*, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite; and yet, *for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing.* The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and, although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the *refrain* of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically, the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short; the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet, the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds), the third of eight, the fourth of seven and a

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half, the fifth the same, the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines taken individually has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their *combination into stanza*; nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

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I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and, secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in “with many a flirt and flutter.”

Not the *least obeisance made he*—not a moment stopped or stayed he,
But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out :

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore*,
“Though thy *crest be shorn and shaven*, thou,” I said, “art sure
no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the nightly
shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian
shore?”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so
plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore ;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
*Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,*
With such name as “Nevermore.”

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The effect of the *dénouement* being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness—this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees anything even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanour. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *dénouement*—which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *dénouement* proper—with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits of the accountable—of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanour, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The Raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"—a word which

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finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness which repels the artistic eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some undercurrent, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal*. It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The undercurrent of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines—

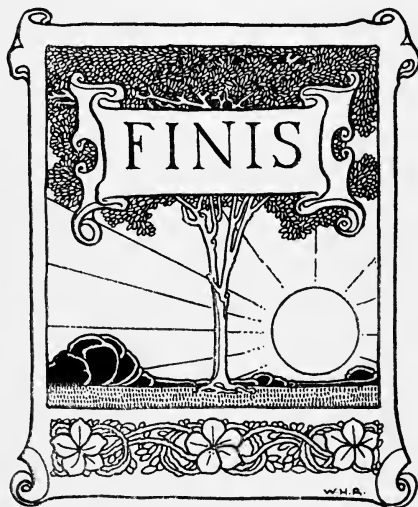
"Take thy beak from out *my heart*, and take thy form from off
my door!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore!"

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It will be observed that the words, "from out my heart," involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, "Nevermore," dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen :

And the Raven, never fitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the
 floor;
And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted—nevermore!





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